



ASBURY
COLLEGE

ERUDITIO ET RELIGIO



Sermon Notes from the Ministry of Jesus

Suggestive Outlines for Preachers and Teachers

BY

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"The Conversion of Brian O'Dillon"

"Like as We Are," etc.



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FOREWORD

More than two thousand years ago, a lonely man, whose soul God had set on fire with the flame of prophecy, lifted up his voice and testified to an unbelieving people concerning One who was to come.

“His name shall be called Wonderful”—it was the long-promised Messiah of whom he spoke. He was to come and to restore God’s people to their former greatness. It is true that the picture which he drew of the coming King did not, in every respect, correspond with their conceptions of him. Wounded, forsaken, abased—how was he to lead his people to victory? Their failure to understand does not seem to have troubled them. They were so sure of their own conceptions that they were ready to interpret everything by these conceptions.

The centuries have come and gone, and the fulfillment of these prophecies has been long ago written on the pages of history. But when were they fulfilled—“His name shall be called Wonderful”? At his advent, when the angels broke into a chorus joy? No, for, while the shepherds rejoiced greatly, we hear no more of them. Was it thirty years later, when he went through Galilee and Judea and Samaria,

and did many mighty works? No, for, though crowds followed him for awhile, and many marveled at his miracles and at his teaching, the impression he made upon many of them seems to have been brief. Then, that was such a little corner of the world. The centers that were supposed then to be moving the world had not heard of him.

We run our eyes over the story of Jesus' ministry till we come to one dreadful week that still convulses our hearts with pain as we contemplate it. We see him snatched from the company of his frightened followers, and after taunts and mockings and pretended trials that were, in themselves, as cruel as death, we see men nail him to the cross. His disciples, baffled and disillusioned, are left without hope. His name bids fair to be wiped from the memory of men. We look further, and we see the Jews wild with fury and amazement, because those who followed after the one they put to death are boldly proclaiming him as the Messiah of Israel. The storm of persecution breaks upon them, but only to render their zeal more ardent. They go everywhere preaching the Word, and soon in scores of places the camp-fires of the new faith have been lighted. Through his name they do many mighty works. Wonderful name? Yes, but this is but the beginning.

Three hundred years slip away, and the Roman emperor declares that he will put

an end to the religion that bears that hated name. Then followed burnings and massacres until at last cruel Diocletian declared that he had made an end to Christianity. But lo! when the name of Diocletian has become little more than a memory, and that to a comparative few, we find multiplied thousands of men who rejoice to be allowed to be called by His name, and who declare boldly that there is no other name under heaven or among men whereby men must be saved.

The world grows wider. The works of men increase in their scope and greatness. The wheels of commerce turn with fiercer speed. The world is filled with their clamor, but still His name grows in power. Great men arise and after a time pass away and are forgotten; not so with that wonderful name.

There was Augustus Cæsar, whose name at the time when Jesus was born was a name to conjure with. There was the Herod whom all the world knew because of the thirty years during which he boldly ruled and builded. To-day these men are remembered in a relative fashion. Books tell us that the one was born seventy-two years *before Christ*, and that the reign of Augustus ended in *the year of our Lord 14*. So it is even with those who during their lives sought to destroy His name on the earth.

As one after another of the great names

grow dim and slip out of sight, one name
grows more radiant. Is not this he of
which the prophet spoke? *His name shall
be called Wonderful!*

M. M. B.

CINCINNATI, O.

I.

"THEN COMETH JESUS."

Matt. 3: 13-17.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The story of Christ's life the model biography. "His life" means not his stay upon earth, but his ministry.

1. The time of his coming. It was in the fullness of time because: (1) The promises concerning that which was to precede his coming had been fulfilled; (2) it was a time of unrest; (3) it was a time of expectancy.

2. Preparation for his appearing. Why did John precede him?

3. At the Jordan, Christ's relations are defined: (1) To John; (2) to mankind; (3) to God.

4. Christ revealed as: (1) The fulfillment of promise; (2) the Brother of man; (3) the only begotten Son of God.

All biography is an example of the survival of the fittest. The things that seem important to a man for the day, and in the small circle in which he moves, may become trivial if we attempt to transfer

them to the more important setting of written history.

For instance, it may interest us to read in our morning paper that the President of the United States ate certain things at luncheon on the day before, but no one would think of putting that fact into a biography for future generations to read.

In honest portraiture, the aim of the artist is to make those who look upon the picture see the man as he really was. This he does, not merely by what he puts into the portrait, but also by what he leaves out of it. The work of a skilled cartoonist often appeals to us more strongly than does the production of the portrait painter, for the very reason that the former does not draw our attention away from the strong lines by adding a multitude of unimportant details. No one can get a correct conception of a man from the reading of his biography, if facts concerning him are recorded without regard to their relative importance. Since no book can ever be made so voluminous as to include all that a man has said and done, the biographer must know how to choose between the merely interesting and the essential.

Thoughtful men have never ceased to marvel at the manner in which the writers of the Gospels have been able to make the real Jesus of Nazareth stand out before those who read their record. No one can read from them for an hour without getting

a clear conception of the One of whom they tell.

It is true that only three years are unfolded to our view, while thirty years are veiled in silence. Concerning the latter fact, the world has questioned grievously. How those who love Him would linger over the story of those Nazareth days! Yet there is not anything on which we may reasonably build our imaginations. The real biography of our Lord begins, not at Bethlehem, but at the Jordan. It is not the lad occupied with common duties in the home, nor yet the young carpenter whom the writers would have us behold, but rather was it Jesus who came from the Jordan, the light shining in his face, to say to men stumbling and perplexed: "*I am the Way.*"

"*Then cometh Jesus.*" While, in the construction of the sentence, these words are merely prelusive, they furnish the climax to much that has preceded them. In the day man first sinned, and therefore first needed a Saviour, came the promise of a Redeemer. Over and over again, as the ages swept on, the promise of his coming was repeated. Came one mighty prophet after another, and God spoke through each of them. Sometimes there was warning, sometimes rebuke, and again encouragement, but through every message there rang the strain, "He is coming!" We turn through the sacred record, and we read of the coming of Elijah and of Isaiah and of Jeremiah, and of a

host of others, but still the world was looking on beyond these. Centuries elapse, and John the Baptist appears and begins to deliver his message. "*Then cometh Jesus;*" and there is nothing beyond him. The message, "He is coming!" no longer sounds. He that should come has come, nor look we for another.

1. *The time of his coming.* For a long time Bible chronologists waged wordy battles in an effort to establish the exact time of the coming of Jesus to the world, yet Paul settles the matter when he declares that "in the fulness of time" God sent his Son. The time of John's appearance in the wilderness was by no means accidental. The hour had struck for the wilderness preacher to begin his work. It was the fullness of time because: (1) The prophecies concerning the Messiah had all been fulfilled. The chapter which contained the story of the rise and downfall of Israel had drawn to a conclusion, and not one word of all that God had promised should come to pass before the appearing of the Redeemer, remained unaccomplished. (2) It was a time of unrest. That strange and seldom erring instinct by which nations and individuals know that the old order has had its day and must give way to something else, was upon them. It was a time of hopeful unrest, which is unlike the unrest of despair. It was the unrest which fills the heart with the courageous belief that a better day is at hand.

2. *Preparation for the King.* Why did not the King prepare his own way? Could not he who knew man's heart perfectly have done both the work of preparation and that which he was to do? Know this: nothing in the divine plan hinges on the ability or the inability of God to do certain things. The time was short, and the days of the Christ among men were to be too brief to be spent in getting men ready to hear.

3. *The relationships of Jesus are defined in this scene at the Jordan.* One day it became known that a strange preacher over in the wilderness was delivering a strange message. While the roads leading out of Jerusalem towards the wilderness were black with people, over in the common village of Nazareth a young man was preparing to leave home. By and by he leaves his childhood home behind him, and for eighty miles over hill and valley he pursues his way. At last, at the Jordan, these two whom God had chosen, meet. (1) *To the Baptist.* One who listens carefully to John's words concerning Jesus had no need to ask again if John were the promised one. John reveals what is here revealed to him, that his relation to Jesus is that of the forerunner. (2) We see set forth his relation *to mankind.* In his answer to the Baptist's protest, he identifies himself with humanity: "It becometh *us*." He has become man and has taken upon himself man's obligations.

He submits to the sinner's baptism, not because he has sinned, but because he has made himself the partner of sinful man (2 Cor. 5:21). (3) We see clearly defined *his relation to the Father*. Upon this question our hopes stand or fall, "Who was he?" Hear the testimony of the Father himself, "*This is my beloved Son.*" Blessed are our eyes, for we have seen in him: (a) The fulfillment of the prophecy; (b) the Brother of man; (c) the only begotten Son of God.

II.

ALONE WITH SATAN.

Matt. 4: 1-11.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: A surprising passage and its real meaning.

1. Satan's advantages. (1) Forbidding surroundings; (2) isolation from his kind (Christ must go alone to meet the tempter); (3) physical exhaustion.

2. The fourfold test. (1) Temptation to doubt; (2) to misuse his power; (3) to give way to spiritual pride; (4) to give selfish ambition first place.

3. The result. Satan gave up the struggle because Jesus (1) met falsehood with the Word of truth; (2) used his will-power; (3) rebuked the tempter.

Familiarity with the story of the temptation of our Lord is the only thing that tempers our surprise when we come upon it. We must place beside it the fact that, when Jesus came to live for awhile the life of man, his life meant, if it meant anything, no evasion of the things that test the fabric of human character.

1. *When Jesus went to face the enemy of souls, the advantage, so far as outward conditions are concerned, was with the latter.* (1) The settings: He was led, not into a shaded woodland, nor into a green and restful valley, but into the desert, among harsh outlines and gloomy, barren wastes. Dreary surroundings never made it easier for any one to resist the devil. (2) Isolation from congenial companionships: But a little while ago he had been amid the sweet companionships of the home at Nazareth. Many a one, strong in the strength of home associations, has fallen a prey to Satan when distance separated him from his loved ones. So far as any material presence was concerned, Jesus was alone with the evil one. (3) Physical exhaustion: When hunger and cold cause men to sin, it does not always mean that they have sold virtue and honor for money. Sometimes it means that privation made them too weak for the struggle with the tempter.

2. *The fourfold test.* (1) Temptation to doubt his own place and mission. "If thou be the Son of God—" Are you sure God spoke to you at the Jordan? Isn't it possible, after all, that you are making a mistake? Medieval theology has acted the part of the devil with many a child of God by teaching him to doubt whether or not he was a child of God, even after God's word had declared that he was.

(2) *Spiritual gifts and personal profit.*

The first suggestion seems harmless, but our Lord recognized its import. Already he had become conscious of his power from on high. He knew its meaning. By it he was to establish the truth of his message and turn men to God. To have used it that he might escape personal discomfort would have been (a) a misuse of power. Many a one has been tempted to prostitute high gifts for mere personal gain. D. L. Moody had a persuasive power that made him one of the best shoe salesmen that were ever on the road. Though a flattering business future opened up before him, he turned his back upon it, when he learned that he could use his gift in persuading men to buy gold tried in the fire. (b) To have used his great power thus would have been giving the physical man the supremacy over the spiritual. Satan has tempted many a man to sacrifice higher things for the sake of bread by telling him that "a man must live."

"A man must live? Pray, tell me why
Life at such cost one has to buy?
In what religion are we told
A man must live?
There are times when a man must die:
Imagine for the battle-cry
Of soldiers with a sword to hold,
Of soldiers with the flag unrolled,
That coward's whine, that liar's lie—
A man must live!"

—Anon.

(3) *Spiritual pride.* Jesus has shown his confidence in the fact that he is the Son of God. Satan lets it go at that, and takes

this confidence as the basis of a new temptation. "You are the Son of God," he agrees, "so there really isn't any need for you to be so cautious. Nothing is going to happen to *you*." He suggests this brilliant and daring way of winning the people *en masse* instead of the slow and painful way that had been set before him. Perhaps he used the same old sneer that he used in the garden of Eden—"You shall not surely die."

(4) *Selfish ambition*. It is not reasonable to believe that our Lord was tempted to demon-worship. Rather, Satan suggests: "Let me be supreme. Let me shape your policy. Don't antagonize the people. Get on the popular side. Do evil that good may come, and in the end everything will be yours."

3. *As gold tried in the fire*. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." The weapons he used are at our command. (1) He met falsehood with the living Word. (2) He used his will-power. (3) He received the heavenly ministry of one who had won in the battle with temptation.

III.

THE NEWS THAT WAS TOO GOOD
TO KEEP.

John 1:35-51.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Evangelism the normal occupation of the church. Lip-service should not be underrated. In the present instance its results were: (1) Two men decided to find out for themselves about Jesus; (2) one of them passed the good news on to his brother.

2. The Lord estimates men, not by what they are, but by what they are capable of becoming.

3. Another man becomes a "live wire."
(1) The convert an evangelist; (2) the challenge of the gospel—"come and see."

4. A guileless heart will not make up for imperfect knowledge.

Heine says, "Ideas master us, possess us and send us into the arena to fight for them." The history of every great cause emphasizes the truth of this. We talk of making modern Christianity evangelistic, when in reality Christianity is the essence

of evangelism. Just as surely as the great thought of Christ's Saviourhood possesses us (and it possesses no man who has not accepted him), it will send us to others as eager messengers. In a magazine article a writer refers to the manner in which the average Socialist allows his beliefs to possess him. He is not a mere convert; he is rather an advocate himself. From henceforth everything is viewed with relation to that which he has embraced, and every man he meets is a possibility in that he is to be made a subject for persuasion and argument. This same writer tells of a machinist who was discharged from his place in a large plant for his activity in Socialistic propaganda. When one of his friends began to express sympathy with him, he replied: "Oh, it was all right. I had just won the last man in the shop, and there wasn't anything left for me to do."

1. *Lip-service should not be underrated.* John had delivered many a mighty message, but we doubt if there had ever been one so portentous in results as this one. They had been hearing wonderful things about the One that was to come, but to have him actually pointed out to them—that was different. After all, isn't it the greatest thing that you and I can do for men to-day? We may not be able to expound nor explain, but we can point men to the living Word and say, "There he is." The results of John's testimony were: (1) They followed Jesus.

Isn't that your spiritual biography and mine? Because we heard some one speak, we followed Jesus. (2) One of them straightway began to share the things he received from the great Teacher. He hurried out of the house, his heart burning with the things that were too good to keep. He must find his brother! "We have found the Christ," we hear him saying. And because of these words, so many things happened! Shall we anticipate a little? The brother went and heard for himself, and as the months passed by, he came very close to the great Teacher. A few years and we see that one who went because his brother told him, bringing multitudes into the kingdom of God. That, you know, was Simon Peter. All because Andrew—plain, commonplace Andrew, so far as we know him—didn't keep the good news to himself.

2. *The possibilities we fail to see.* Jesus saw something more than Simon Peter the fisherman. We have not the divine discernment of what men may become, but it is worth our while to remember that the commonplace "addition" to the church may be the rock-man of to-morrow.

3. *Another man becomes a live wire.* The next day Jesus called Philip, and Philip followed him. It isn't likely that Jesus hadn't, in the meantime, called anybody else. We believe this incident is recorded because it didn't end with the call—nor with the following, either, for that matter. It is the

"Philip-converts" that count for more than we can put into reports and tabulated statements. (1) Christ found Philip, and Philip begins to imitate Christ by finding somebody else. (2) He makes the message attractive. He knew what the devout Nathaniel longed for most. No doubt the two friends had talked it over wistfully more than once. "Oh, Nathaniel," we fancy we hear him cry, "we've found him." "Found him?" "Yes, the one we've been longing for." That is pretty much the same message you and I have for men to-day. Christ is the fulfillment of our longing. He is the one that can satisfy, only so many are blind to the fact.

4. *A guileless heart will not make up for imperfect knowledge.* The truth won because (1) Nathaniel was willing to listen, and to ask questions; (2) he was willing to put the message to a test. Fortunately, there were two honest men who took part in this conversation—Philip, who was ready to have his claim investigated, and Nathaniel, who was ready to investigate. In such a case the results will take care of themselves. Nathaniel was not the last man to find the pearl of great price in a place where it didn't seem reasonable to expect it. A half-century ago, a cultured man, whose religion gave Jesus merely the place of an accomplished teacher, was spending a few days in a rural neighborhood where one of the pioneer preachers was holding a meet-

ing. The host, knowing the views of the scholarly man, said: "You ought to go and hear the preacher at the schoolhouse. He will be able to set you right." While the guest did not say so, his mental comment was, "The idea of that uncouth fellow's being able to instruct me!" However, he was fair-minded enough to give the preacher a chance. The confidence of his host had not been misplaced. Like Nathaniel, the one-time doubter was led to confess, "Master, thou art the Son of God!"

In the possession of the great truth pride was forgotten.

IV.

A SOCIAL FUNCTION THAT HONORED JESUS.

John 2: 1-11.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The all-around life of Jesus among men.

1. An unanticipated need. The divine consideration for our commonplace needs.

2. A need made known. A need made known to the Lord equivalent to an appeal. Mary's words make it manifest that (1) she was certain of his sympathetic interest; (2) she looked to him to find some way of relieving the situation; (3) she did not understand the relation that must henceforth exist between them.

3. A need supplied. (1) He made use of things at hand; (2) he called upon others to do their part.

4. The greater and the lesser results. (1) The faith of his disciples was confirmed; (2) the temporal need was supplied.

So far as the things that pertain to the outer life are concerned, Jesus lived the life of a common man. He neither evaded nor

sought the things that would fall naturally to a man of his class. Men who represented these classes were surprised in turn that he lived the life of neither a voluptuary nor of an ascetic. He chose the more difficult course of sharing man's common life and of giving to its material things a spiritual meaning. He taught men to perform life's prosaic duties as unto the Lord.

He went to the wedding just as any man might have gone, but let us note that this, as was every other occasion, was used to his Father's glory. In our modern life we have almost decided that it is impossible for a man to honor Christ under such circumstances.

1. *An unsupplied need.* What a common little incident this seems at first glance. The refreshments were not going to hold out. Have you ever felt a cold sensation creeping up and down your spine, over a like calamity? If you have, this shortage will not seem trivial. If you had found yourself in a like dilemma, would it have seemed to you a small matter? In his subsequent action, Jesus showed that even the little things of life are not beneath his notice.

2. *A need made known.* This story would probably not have been written if there had not been in the company one who believed that the first step toward having needs supplied was that of making these needs known. Christ's answer to Mary

shows that the information she gave was an appeal. This was an evidence that (1) she had faith in his power to relieve the situation; (2) that she was certain of his sympathetic interest in the affairs of others; (3) that she had not an understanding of the relation that must henceforth exist between the two.

3. *A need supplied.* This miracle was, in some respects, typical of all the signs that were to follow it. (1) Jesus did not do needless things; he made use of the means at hand. This was a help to faith. Everybody in the house had, no doubt, seen the water-pots. The members of the household knew them from long usage. There were no false bottoms nor concealed apartments in the jars. The servants could also give their testimony, if it were needed. They filled the jars with water. How striking is the contrast between Christ's way and that of those who profess to work wonders—with the lights turned low, and behind screens and curtains. (2) Jesus required the service of others. As in the saving of a soul, so with this miracle, the divine work begins where obedience completes its work.

4. *Surpassing results.* It was typical that Jesus gave not merely something that was equal to that which had been exhausted, but something that surpassed it. The host would have been satisfied with something not equal to what he had already given his guests. When the appetite is less keen and

the mind is not so susceptible to impressions, the difference in quality is not likely to be noticed. Christianity refutes the doctrine of the cynic. With those who taste its rich things, the best things are reserved till the last of the feast. When the sounds of merriment have grown low and one after another has slipped away from his place, the master of the feast brings out his sweetest, richest things for those that linger.

5. *The greater result.* Something else was wrought at the wedding feast besides the change of water into wine. It was the new conception of him that came, from this hour, into the hearts of his disciples. It did not matter so much, at this period, what the people in general thought of Jesus. But it was necessary that his followers should have a rock-firm belief in him. Dire, indeed, are the results when it can not be said that "his disciples believe on him."

In the characterization of this that he had done, we have set forth the purpose of the miracle. Let us not belittle the miracles of Jesus, since they were the *signs* that proved the truth of his wonderful claims.

V.

A CLEAN-UP CAMPAIGN THAT
WAS UNPOPULAR.

John 2: 14-22.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: A wayside picture of the Passover pilgrims nearing the Holy City.

1. One may do right things in the wrong way. A necessary business had become an evil because: (1) It defeated the great mission of the temple: (a) Its associations were to be spiritual; (b) it had been handed over to God to be kept sacred for naught but worship and communion with Jehovah.

2. Jesus our model in dealing with evil. (1) He reproved sinners; (2) he took the enforcement of law into his own hands.

3. He aroused the anger of those with whom he interfered. (1) They questioned his authority; (2) they received a fearless answer.

Spring was at hand, and the faithful from every quarter were gathering at the Holy City to keep the feast. As caravan after caravan neared Jerusalem, the song of the Passover pilgrims was taken up, and the

air was athrob with the solemn but joyful chant: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up unto the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." But as one came nearer to the temple, whither the tribes went up to pay their vows to Jehovah, the glorious psalms of praise must have been swallowed in the babel of sounds that partook of the bazar and the market rather than of the house of prayer. Instead of the place where one might find, in reverent silence or in the uplifting prayers, peace and communion with Jehovah, there were the strident cries of the merchantmen and the bickerings of those who came to buy.

1. *These men whom Jesus rebuked were doing right things in a wrong way.* It was a needed thing that some one should offer for sale sheep and oxen and doves for the temple sacrifices. It was right that those who sold should receive certain compensation for doing so. The business of the money-changers was a legitimate one. The traffic was right, but it was being carried on in the wrong place, and doubtless in many cases it was accompanied by extortion and sharp dealing. (1) The traffickers were interfering with that for which the temple was built. (a) Its associations were to be forever spiritual. Man has continually to guard against the crushing out of the spiritual nature. The secular crowds so closely upon him that it is hard for man to remem-

ber that life is more than meat. When the bazar and the vaudeville show alternate with prayer and praise and the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the temple of God, we can scarcely say that its suggestions are spiritual. (b) The house that had been handed over to God with solemn ceremonies, had been confiscated by the worldly minded.

2. *Jesus presents an example for those who would deal with the corrupters of righteousness.* (1) He spoke plainly against their corrupt practices; (2) he enforced the neglected law in putting a stop to their wrong-doing. There are some people who would like to wipe this picture out from the life of our Lord. It looks too much like making men behave by using force—a sort of prohibition that follows up command with penalty.

When people remind us that you “can not make men righteous by act of Parliament,” they tell us nothing new. Nevertheless, a good many more people are righteous than would be if there were no compulsive laws. When some one rebuked Dr. Parkhurst for his part in the campaign against vice in New York City, reminding him that the wicked man flees when no one is pursuing, he replied, “That is true, but he makes better time when he knows that some one is after him.”

3. *Jesus was willing to arouse personal animosity for the sake of right.* He knew: (1) That peace is never to be made the first

consideration when moral warfare is on; (2) that those who are disturbed in their wrong-doing are always ready with false insinuations. "By what authority do you interfere with our business?" The saloon-keeper who brazenly evades and breaks the law of the State is always ready to talk about his rights when you try to interfere with him. The fact that he is violating not only the moral law, but the very spirit of the Constitution, in disturbing the happiness and peace of the community, is ignored.

4. *Nobility of spirit does not always mean pleasing the multitude.* Sometimes the things that are to be done can not be done with a smiling countenance and suave manner. Imagine John the Baptist's denouncing the Pharisees as a generation of vipers, and using a honeyed tone and soft inflections. Fancy our Lord's wearing a polite smile as he used the whip of small cords upon those ~~who~~ were trespassing in the temple!

5. *Another temple.* At this time Jesus gave a hint of the day when the great visible temple should be swept away, and when the dwelling-place of the Most High should be within the hearts of his followers. Unseen by our mortal eyes, the Lord looks in to-day on the temples that you and I have solemnly dedicated to his service. Does he rejoice in their incense of praise and holiness, or is his countenance stern while he grasps in his hand the whip of small cords?

VI.

IN A NIGHT CLASS WITH JESUS.

John 3: 1-22.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The impartiality of Christ in dealing with the classes and the masses.

1. The character of Nicodemus. (1) Support of the belief that he was cowardly: (a) He approached Jesus under cover of darkness; (b) his impersonal protest when an attempt was made to take Jesus without trial; (c) failure to declare himself when his associates sneeringly suggested that he was a follower of the Nazarene; (d) offering of spices for the body of Jesus not till after Joseph had set the example. (2) In defense of Nicodemus: (a) Natural doubt about the influence his act might exert; (b) a narrow-minded man in his position would not have gone at all; (c) the night may have afforded the only opportunity for seeing Jesus, when he was not pressed by the multitude.

2. An honest tribute.

3. A startling answer. (1) It seemed to deal with the impossible; (2) it was a blow to the pride of the son of Abraham.

4. A twofold work. Outer and inner conformance to the will of God.

It is universally conceded that Christ's conversation with Nicodemus reveals deep and fundamental spiritual truths; but this is not all. It is a part of the testimony concerning the absolute impartiality of Jesus in dealing with men. He made no special effort to attach to his train men who were rich and great, yet he patiently dealt with them and took into consideration their special weaknesses and hindrances.

1. *Weighing Nicodemus.* Certainly, on one side or the other, Nicodemus has been woefully misunderstood, since such varying opinions have prevailed concerning him. (1) *Men have concluded that he was cowardly* and lacking in decision of character because (a) he visited Jesus under cover of darkness. (b) His impersonal protest when the ruler sought to take Jesus without a trial. (c) His failure to declare himself when his associates sneeringly suggested that he was a follower of the Nazarene. (d) His bringing spices for the burial of Jesus —after Joseph had set the example. (2) In defense of Nicodemus it may be said: (a) He may have had serious doubts about the influence of a man in his high position going to a *young* man of peasant origin for instruction. (b) A narrow-minded man, holding the position of head man in the syn-

agogue ("*the* master in Israel"), would not have gone to Jesus at all. (c) The night visit may have had its advantages. There was a better opportunity for a heart-to-heart conversation.

2. *An honest tribute.* The beginning of the address Nicodemus was never permitted to make was admirable, but if he had understood the claims of Jesus, it was not consistent. If Jesus were not the Christ, then he could not be a teacher sent from God. No man can claim to be authorized of God, while he is making false pretensions. There is ample excuse for Nicodemus, as Christ's claim to Messiahship had not been generally declared. The inconsistency of Unitarianism in those who claim to be Christian can not be so excused. They mock him who call him "good Master" and deny the things which he himself claimed. Nicodemus was prepared, at least, to give the miracles their proper place, since he accepted them as credentials of Christ's divine mission.

3. *A wonderful answer.* Jesus answered the question of this man's soul. He did not wait for it to be put into words. The answer was startling because: (1) It set forth a physical impossibility. The materialistic tendency of the times revealed itself in the answer of Nicodemus. (2) It was a blow to the pride of a son of Abraham. No one was so arrogantly proud of his birth as was the Jew. To tell him that his birth was an obstacle to his admittance into the kingdom

of God seemed little short of outrageous. Fancy one's informing the King of England, with the blood of the royal houses of Europe in his veins, that he is disqualified for membership in some organization because of his birth, and you may get some idea of the feelings of Nicodemus.

4. *A twofold work.* The Jew made much of outward conformity to the will of God. Jesus said again and again that this was well, but he also said that it was not enough. The transformed man is not the one who does not conform, in the outward life, to the will of God. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit," Jesus said. There is no membership in the kingdom save by birth, and the conditions upon which one might be born anew were to take in both spiritual and formal submission to the will of God. Later on, Paul thus stated the same truth: "For ye are the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ."

VII.

AN UNLIKELY FIELD AND A GRACIOUS HARVEST.

John 4: 1-39.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: A study in contrasts.

1. An unfavorable situation. (1) In the midst of hostile people; (2) weary and in need of refreshment; (3) the subject was a woman.

2. A study in teaching. Jesus was (1) direct; (2) he was not hampered by conventionalism; (3) he was not discouraged by the unlovely character of the one to be reached.

3. Specific difficulties. (1) She held to a false belief; (2) she was intolerant; (3) she looked upon him as an enemy; (4) she tried to turn him aside.

4. He offered her rich pearls of truth, concerning (1) the nature of God; (2) acceptable worship; (3) his Messiahship.

5. He reached the woman: (1) By offering her something worth while; (2) by manifesting concern for her welfare; (3) by showing her her own condition.

6. The convert becomes an evangelist, and rouses a whole city.

From no one scene in the life of our Lord can we gain an adequate conception of his person or of his purpose. Our last glimpse of him showed him in conversation with one of the learned men of his nation, and proving himself to be more than equal to the occasion. To have looked upon him here and to have turned away might have been to receive the impression that he came to appeal solely to those who were well versed in the law and the prophets. The scene depicted in our present lesson presents, over against the former, a striking study in contrasts.

1. *So far as our human conceptions are concerned, the situation was most unfavorable.* (1) He was in the midst of a country where the Jew, no matter how quietly he might order his going, was likely to be subjected to insult and annoyances. (2) He was weary. He stopped to rest—not to preach. This is not the only occasion on which our Lord's rest-hour became one of strenuous work. (3) The stranger was a woman, and therefore, according to popular conceptions of the time, beneath the notice of a teacher.

2. *Jesus gives us here a wonderful study in teaching.* (1) He was simple and direct. He made his need the channel of approach:

"Give me to drink." (2) He set aside conventionality. (3) He did not allow the unsavory past of this woman to deter him from making an effort in her behalf. Because Jesus did not seek the Gentiles, we may conclude that Jesus saw uncommon possibilities in this case.

3. *This case presented not only general, but also specific, difficulties.* (1) The fact that the Samaritan religion was grossly erroneous did not cause him to refrain from speaking to her. (2) She was full of intolerant religious pride and was likely to resent the interference of a Jew. She did not want his counsel or his teaching. (3) She felt that this man who spoke to her despised her. Her bitter query revealed this. Her people had never forgiven the Jews for rejecting their help in rebuilding the temple. Then, her own unworthiness increased this feeling of suspicion and surprise. There is something pathetic in her question concerning his condescension in even addressing her. It was a commentary upon the Jews with whom she had come in contact. One of the most serious hindrances to reaching the unfortunate is often their bitter belief that every righteous person has a blow for them. (4) The woman tried to evade the issue by introducing controversy. "We say this mountain," she declared glibly, "while ye say in Jerusalem." Jesus calmly brushed her petty attempt at evasion aside, and spoke to her of what God says.

Here is a lesson for the divided church. Men have been so busy with the "what I say" and the "what you say" that they have forgotten to ask, "What does God say?"

4. *Jesus did not hesitate about committing to this woman some of the rarest pearls of spiritual truth.* (1) Concerning worship.

(2) Concerning the spiritual being of God.

(3) Concerning his Messiahship. Upon her own vague and erroneous conception of the Messiah he threw the light of sublime truth. His words found the woman ready to receive them. Compare the dull, gross-minded creature the woman appears at the beginning of the interview with the one drinking in the deepest truths, and learn a lesson concerning the power of the truth.

5. *Jesus reached the woman.* (1) By offering her something worth while. Maybe we fail sometimes to reach the lost because, instead of offering them eternal salvation, we merely try to appeal to their selfishness by telling them that they will be more comfortable and prosperous if they accept Christ.

6. *The convert became an evangelist.* The woman, flying back to the city, ready to face the sneers of those who knew her, gives us a hint of why she, of all others, was so honored that day. The blunt words of those whom she induced to come and see for themselves make it plain that she had boldly declared that this indeed was the Christ of whom the prophets had written.

VIII.

HOW JESUS PUT A MAN ON HIS FEET.

John 5: 1-11.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The end of the first year's ministry.

1. Jesus was attracted by human need. It appealed to him because he desired: (1) To relieve suffering; (2) to help men to higher living; (3) to confirm faith in his message.

2. Man's desire to relieve need a proof of his kinship to Christ.

3. The complications of bodily affliction.

4. The needy man determines his own fate. Christ violated no man's will.

5. Power bestowed for use—"saved to serve."

A year had passed since our Lord went up to the Passover and startled the rulers by his stern and sweeping measures in casting the invaders out of his Father's house. What a wonderful year it had been! Wonderful to those he had brought back to life and strength again, wonderful to those

who had listened in wonder to the words such as never before man spake, but most wonderful of all to those whose privilege it had been to be with him as his near friends and associates.

1. *Jesus was attracted by human need.* It was seldom the happy and the prosperous who are mentioned in connection with his name. When he was in the synagogue we are told that "There was a man there that had a withered hand," or "There was a man that had an unclean spirit." Again, it was the sick in soul and body to whom the eyes of the great Physician turned. Jesus went to the needy because: (1) He had compassion on (suffered with) them. (2) He saw that men's afflictions were a handicap to right living. He desired to do a higher work for them. (3) He wished to confirm faith in his great message. Here we find the major reason for his mighty works: (a) It was not to banish disease, for he healed only a few compared with the many sick who must have been in the world at that time; (b) it was not to satisfy those who were not in sympathy with him, for we are told that "he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

2. *Men show their Christlikeness to the extent that they listen to the cry of suffering humanity.* Every case of need is an appeal for help. When one who is able to relieve that need becomes conscious of it, it becomes, to him, a personal call.

3. *The complications of bodily afflictions.* Growing out of his physical affliction, no doubt, were other afflictions: (1) He was evidently a mendicant; (2) was the victim of repeated disappointments; (3) the world was indifferent to his needs.

4. *The needy man must decide upon his own case.* Jesus did not force men to be cured of their bodily afflictions, nor does he force his services as the Physician of souls upon any one now. To put the case into the crude language of the street, it was up to the man, himself, whether or not he would be healed.

5. *Jesus directed the man to use the power that had been bestowed upon him.* This is typical of what we are trying to do for men in social service. When we put a man on his feet again, we expect him to use the advantage he has gained. The healed man himself said, "He that made me whole, the same said to me, Take up thy bed and walk." This is typical of his will concerning men for whom he does the larger work of making new the soul. Jesus did not make the helpless man whole that he might lie in comfort by the pool of mercy, neither did he make you a new creature, my brother, that you might enjoy yourself. He wants you to go forth in the world and use your powers for him. He that made you whole, the same said, "Arise and walk."

IX

THE FOLKS BACK HOME.

Luke 4: 15-30.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: A contrast—Samaria and Nazareth.

1. The home test. (1) Blindness to merit with which it is familiar; (2) freedom with criticism; (3) resentment against claims to superiority; (4) conventional prejudice.

2. Jesus sought opportunities. (1) He went to the synagogue; (2) he volunteered to take a leading part.

3. He put new life into a bit of dead routine. His reading attracted attention because: (1) He understood it; (2) he applied it to his hearers; (3) it was his own message.

4. The message was momentous because it meant: (1) Light; (2) liberty; (3) comfort; (4) relief from burdens that weighed down upon the poor.

5. The words that made an old story new: "This day is this gospel fulfilled in your ears."

A little while ago Jesus was in Samaria,

surrounded by the enemies of his people. To-day we find him back home, where he had spent his childhood, and surrounded by those who were, in a peculiar sense, his own. Yet Samaria heard and believed, while at Nazareth they rejected his message and even sought his life.

1. *A severe test.* The genuineness of greatness is never so severely tested as when it is brought into contact with those who have associated familiarly with its possessor. As a rule, "home folks" are (1) blind to many excellencies because they are accustomed to seeing them. (2) They feel that familiarity gives them the right to criticize. (3) They resent the idea of superiority on the part of those they have always known, when they would be ready enough to acknowledge it in the stranger. (4) They find little to interest them in those who are not surrounded by a halo of mystery. Jesus knew all of this, but he did not allow it to deter him from manifesting himself to his own. (5) There is a disposition to refuse to believe in the genuineness of one's merit when he has not gone through some conventional process. His teaching, they could not deny, bore signs of superiority, but they called it into question and set it aside as naught, declaring that he was not educated. The fact that he taught as he did was an unmistakable proof that he was educated, but he was not a graduate of the school of the rabbis, and that was enough for them.

In their narrow-mindedness, process counted for more than result.

2. *Jesus sought opportunities.* (1) He went to the place where he knew he would find the people. (2) He volunteered to serve. Small men sometimes sit back "on their dignity," and wait to be asked to do even the things which they see need to be done. Jesus "stood up for to read."

3. *Jesus put life into what had been dead formality.* The spiritually minded make every act of worship spiritual. His mere reading attracted attention. We can imagine that wandering and listless eyes were suddenly fixed upon him. Something unusual was taking place. "The eyes of all of them that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him." (1) He understood what he read. (2) It was his own message to their hearts. (3) He knew its worth.

4. *The message was momentous.* "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." The words of the writer would have been useless if this had not been true. It is so with every message of the Bible. Take away its inspiration, and its first value is gone. The message proclaimed (1) good news to the poor. Jesus did not come to endow every man with lands and gold, but he did come to bring to men the spirit that makes the oppression of man because he is poor and weak impossible. (2) The release of the captives. Through appetite and passion, Satan binds. Christ alone liberates men

from these tyrants. (3) Sight to the blind. The nearer men come to God, the clearer will be their vision. They will learn to see things according to their real value. (4) He came to reach the disorders which law can not touch—those of the heart. He alone promises relief to the broken-hearted.

5. *Jesus changed prophecy to fulfillment.* They had heard those words before, but they had not meant much of anything to them. Somehow, as this preacher reads, their hearts thrill strangely. *It sounds like it's true!* They are holding their breath. The eyes of all them that are in the synagogue are fastened upon him. At last he speaks. What is it he says? "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Through the centuries prophets and priests had said of this day, "It is coming." Now one stands before them and says, "It is here!" Thank God that to-day, as you and I present this gracious message to a lost world, it is ours to say, "*This day is this gospel fulfilled in your ears.*"

X.

A NEW BUSINESS OPENING.

Luke 5: 1-11.

OUTLINE

Introduction: Jesus and the crowds.

1. What the crowd craved. Distinguishing between "popular demand" and actual craving.

2. An after meeting that revealed: (1) The dilemma of Simon; (2) the doubts of Simon; (3) the faith of Simon.

3. When they launched out into the deep, and let down the nets. (1) Full nets; (2) a light to Simon; (3) an alternative to be faced.

4. A consequence of discipleship.

What an eager crowd it was that listened to him that morning! In their anxiety to hear, people forgot even the comfort and safety of the preacher.

Jesus set us an example, in that he did the best thing possible for these people under the circumstances. He is the same teacher who gave himself to teaching the one scholar. He might have sent the people away, because great crowds are at best

unsatisfactory to deal with. But one hearer or a thousand is a precious opportunity in the eyes of one who really longs to save souls.

1. *Jesus gave the people what they came to hear, whether they understood their own cravings or not.* What if he had delivered a religio-literary or humorous address? What if he had talked about the "poetry of the sea," or the relation between labor and capital in the commercial cities that bordered the Sea of Galilee? Why, he would have been breaking faith with those who had come to him, under the impression that they would hear the word of God.

2. *What the after meeting revealed.* Jesus was not content simply with dealing with men *en masse*. There was an after session when he had a heart-to-heart talk with the fishermen. Jesus knew that the depression that came from a night of fruitless toil was weighing upon these men. The command of Jesus presented (1) the dilemma of the outspoken Simon. (2) The doubts of Simon. His protest was that of a fisherman. (3) The faith of Simon. From the standpoint of a fisherman, his doubts were well founded, but he knew something of the One who gave the order. Don't find fault with him for virtually saying, "I don't see any use in it, but, because you say so, I will do it." It was this very thing that made it an act of faith. If he had suddenly become aware of some reason why the net should

be let down at this particular place, then he might have done it because of prudence rather than because of his conviction that the Master knew best.

3. *Some of the results of taking Jesus at his word.* (1) There was the miracle of the breaking nets. (2) There was the swift flood of light which revealed Christ to Simon and Simon to himself. Simon's feeling was very like that which comes to most people when they first realize the beauty and holiness of the Saviour of the world, and the dark unworthiness of their own lives. They can not bear the contrast. They must either yield to him, or get away from his presence.

4. *Soul-saving a consequence of following Christ.* Following Christ will make of any one who has the courage to try it, a fisher of men. Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." That is both a reward and a consequence of following Christ. Of course Peter didn't understand it that day. How could he? But in his case, as in the case of every man who has left his boats and his nets to follow Jesus, the result has been the same. If one does not hear the call to save others, it is because he has not chosen the path that leads to the highways. A company of students was in the habit of going with a favorite teacher to the forest in search of botanical specimens. There were those who invariably brought back valuable trophies; a few, how-

ever, reported having found nothing worth while. One of the latter complained to the teacher of the barrenness of his search. "Walk beside me to-morrow," the teacher answered, "and you will find what you want." Here is a message for the one whose life seems barren of results. Go touch with your feet His footprints. *I* need not remind you where they will lead you. If you follow him, he will *make* you to become a fisher of men.

XI.

FIRST AID TO THE INJURED.

Mark 2: 1-12.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: How Jesus drew men.

1. A poor man with a rich possession. Friends: (1) Who did what they could; (2) who combined forces; (3) who did not turn back in the face of difficulties; (4) who made a way, when none could be found.

2. Jesus honored the faith of those who overcame obstacles to reach his presence. (1) He publicly commended faith; (2) he attended to the man's greatest need first; (3) he brought him relief from physical bondage.

3. He had thought for the multitude.

The world has not changed much since the time of our Lord. Wherever, through the faithfully proclaimed Word, Christ is revealed, and the miracle of transformed lives is being wrought, the people will come to see and to hear.

1. *A poor man who was rich.* There was one man in the city to whom life could not have meant much; that is, such a life

as he was forced to live. So far as having a part in the world's life, he was no man at all, but, for all this, he was rich. Next to the spiritual gifts which Heaven bestows, there is nothing so priceless as a real friend. The sick man had four friends. (1) Friends who did what they could. These men could not cure their friend, but there was one thing they could do, and that was take him to One who could. In this we find summed up man's part in the work of soul-saving. We can not save men ourselves, but we can take them to the Christ who alone has power on earth to forgive sins. There are some Christians who can not tell others much about him whom they have believed, but they can take the unsaved to where others are telling the story. (2) These friends combined forces. While we can not lay too much stress upon the importance of the individual, no man does anything worth while without at least the co-operation of others. The fact that we can not do our best work alone is not a reflection upon our ability, but simply a working out of the doctrines that we are members one of another. (3) These men were dauntless. We are told that "when they could not come near"—they could not, but eventually *they did*. That sounds like the history of more than one brave undertaking. "Can not" often means can not—by the use of ordinary means; but to the dauntless soul it doesn't mean failure. The crowd was in

the way, and those who had the best places near the door were not going to give them up. One might think that the crowd would give way for the man who so needed to be brought to the notice of the great Teacher, but crowds are not unselfish, and he who expects the careless world to help him on to God, will usually meet with disappointment.

(4) They did not count the cost too great. We can imagine some frugal souls cautioning them as they mounted the roof, and again as they proceeded to take out the tiles, that they would have a damage bill to pay. We may be certain, however, that after they saw their friend walking away, fully restored, they were ready to say, "It was worth all that it cost."

2. *Jesus honored the faith of the men who brought the afflicted one.* (1) The words of Jesus to the sick man make it plain that the one who was brought to Jesus believed on him, since the rich gift of forgiveness is never bestowed upon an unbelieving heart. (2) He attended to the man's greatest need first. The expression, "First aid to the injured," is almost as common among the schoolchildren as it is in hospitals and nurses' training-schools. Ask the child what he would do in case of a severed artery, and he will begin by saying, "The first thing," etc. He has been taught that it will not be enough that he go through the several processes directed; each one must be in its proper place. (3) When the paralytic was

let down through the roof into the presence of the Lord, immediate aid was rendered, but the first aid was not to his crippled and diseased body. He did not neglect the man's physical infirmity—Jesus never did that—but he gave us a lesson as to the relative urgency of spiritual and physical needs.

In our efforts to save men wounded and poisoned by sin, is there a "first aid" to be rendered? The mere sociologist will tell us that the first thing we must do is to lift people out of their squalid surroundings, and give them soap, baths, parks and circulating libraries. "Then, if you want to," they add, "talk to them about their souls." While no one will deny that the first thing we ought to do for a starving man is to give him something to eat, still the regeneration of the slums means, first of all, the regeneration of the people who live there. Make a man righteous and clean within, and he will buy his own soap and move out of his dreadful surroundings. Sin is responsible for the slum, and the cure of sin is its only cure.

3. *Consideration for the multitude.* Jesus had an eye not alone to the sick man, nor yet to the faithful four. "That ye may know," he says. His heart yearns for the careless, faultfinding crowd. "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." This is the Golden Text of the Bible. Beside of it other messages are only relatively

precious. It meant everything, or it meant nothing, to those that heard him. He who has not come to know this for himself has still life's greatest lesson to learn.

XII.

THE NEW CODE AND THE NEW KINGDOM.

Matthew, chapters 5-7.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The old and the new.

1. The teachings of Jesus presented striking contrasts with prevailing views. (1) About the kingdom of God. Different views that prevailed: (a) That God would again set up a theocracy; (b) that they were to become a world power. (2) His teachings on the subject of blessedness directly opposite to their own. (3) On the subject of true religion. (4) He condemned those who commended themselves. (5) Concerning membership and entrance to the kingdom.

As concerns truth there has been nothing new since the beginning of time, nor can there be anything new to the end of time. We rightly characterize truth when we speak of it as being eternal.

While Jesus came to set up a new kingdom and institute a new code, both were new only as they related to man's previous position and knowledge.

1. *The teachings of Jesus presented a striking contrast with the popular conceptions of the times.*

(1) Concerning the kingdom of God. All of the Jews looked forward to the setting up of a new order, but all were not united in their conception of what it was to be. (a) There was a remnant of the really spiritual and pious, who looked for a restoration of the theocracy as it was under David. To this class doubtless belonged Simeon and Anna, and Joseph of Arimathea. (b) There were the Pharisees, to whom the coming of the Messiah meant the setting up of a world power like Greece or Rome, but greater than either. To this idea avarice and ambition had added many gorgeous details. They were making themselves secure in their positions of authority with the hope of "getting in first" when the new order went into effect.

(2) There was a contrast between his teaching on the subject of blessedness and their own ideas about it. Under the old dispensation the man whom God blessed was the one who had material prosperity. Not one of the eight Beatitudes offered houses and lands and cattle and gold to the man that pleased God. The conqueror Jesus set forth was not the man who with flaming sword rode over his prostrate enemies, but rather the peacemaker, who conquered himself.

(3) The religion he set forth contrasted

with Phariseeism of the time. The Pharisees laid stress on prayer, fasting and almsgiving. If this had meant worship, self-denial and benevolence, they would have indeed pleased God. That they meant none of these things is evident from the scathing portrayal of their pretended religion and holiness. The Pharisee never neglected his prayer, but, as one has said, "he went through his religious exercises with the precision of a clock and with about as much emotion."

(4) Instead of commending them for the superior holiness they manifested by judging the sinner, they were sternly rebuked and accused of inconsistency.

(5) His teachings on the subject of entrance into the kingdom of God were contrary to their ideas. The things upon which they had rested their hopes were of no avail. He lays down the conditions of love and obedience. The sermon closes with the picture of the house on the rock and the house on the sands. Hear him! "He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a man that built his house upon a rock."

XIII.

GOD AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

Matt. 5: 33-37; 6: 5-8, 24-34; 7: 7-27.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Man's threefold duty: God's claim first.

1. The sermon presents God as the supreme ruler of the heart. (1) Impossibility of divided allegiance; (2) the only Judge.

2. Reverence for his name. (1) Necessary to real worship; (2) a means of exalting him in the eyes of men.

3. Complete trust in God. (1) Fretting due to lack of faith; (2) earthly fatherhood a partial picture of his love; (3) lessons from nature.

4. Necessity of prayer to God. (1) We must ask if we would receive; (2) secret prayer; (3) the scope of prayer.

5. Submission to God the great necessity.

6. Seeing God: (1) In his works; (2) his word; (3) as Guide and Helper.

Broadly speaking, the whole duty of

man falls into three divisions; namely, his duty to God, to mankind, to himself. Naturally, the first comes first in point of importance, and, in reality, covers the other two.

The Sermon on the Mount is not, as some seem to imagine, a mere set of rules for good conduct, no more spiritual than a book of etiquette. Men who ignore God and all spiritual life only make themselves ridiculous, and display their pitiful ignorance, when they tell us that their religion is the religion of the Sermon on the Mount. In reality, whoever comes up to the standard of conduct set forth in these words of our Lord, must be in constant and vital communion with the Almighty.

1. *The Sermon on the Mount sets forth God as the supreme ruler of the heart.* (1) It declares the impossibility of divided allegiance. God and mammon bid for the affections and devotion of most men. Jesus says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (2) It bids us recognize him as the only rightful Judge, who can sit in judgment upon me.

2. *This sermon enjoins reverence.* The very name of the Almighty is to be wrapped about with the mantle of veneration. The reason is not far to seek. To carelessly mingle his name with coarse, angry or even idle words has its twofold effect of evil. (1) It can not fail to lessen our adoration for him. (2) It lowers his name in the eyes of those who hear it frequently thus misused.

3. *It urges us to completely trust God.* While trust dwells in the heart, it will manifest itself in the outward life. (1) Fretting is set down as due to a lack of faith in God's goodness. (2) Earthly fatherhood is held up as an imperfect suggestion of the love of the divine Father. (3) Nature is called upon to teach God's care for that which he has made.

4. *The Sermon on the Mount teaches the necessity of prayer.* (1) The natural relations between asking and receiving are set forth. While he blesses us continually, the rule is, "He that asketh receiveth." (2) The futility of prayer, when the world is allowed to intrude upon us, is shown where he says, "Enter into thine inner chamber, and shut thy door." (3) The scope of prayer is suggested in the words which followed his "After this manner therefore pray ye."

5. *This sermon makes attention and submission to the will of God the great test by which man must stand or fall.* "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them." When we sum up these teachings we find that the religion of the Sermon on the Mount includes worship and faith and prayer and obedience. Truly there is nothing here to bolster up the hopes of those who hope by common morality, and nothing more, to win a place in the kingdom of heaven.

6. *The Sermon on the Mount reveals to*

man the possibility of discerning God. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall *see* God." (1) The man who is pure in heart sees God in the work of his hands. He, alone, sees God as he walks forth and looks upon sky and sea and wood and field. To him "the heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament sheweth his handiwork." (2) The pure in heart see the God who reveals himself in his Word. The sensual and low-minded can have no conception of him. John, in speaking to believers of the coming of the Lord, says: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." There is a relation of reason and result between being like God and seeing him. (3) The pure in heart see God beside them to guard and strengthen—see him as did Stephen when he looked up and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. They see him a strong defense against the evils that oppose, as did Elisha at Dothan, when he prayed that the young man's eyes might be opened to see that all the mountains round about them were full of the chariots and horsemen of Jehovah.

XIV.

BROTHERHOOD AND THE SER-
MON ON THE MOUNT.

Matt. 5: 21-33, 43-48; 7: 1-5.

OUTLINE.

1. Protection the purpose of civil law.
(1) Not from the forces of nature; (2) not from wild beasts; (3) law is intended to protect man from man.
2. The heart-life that determines man's relations with his brothers. (1) Anger; (2) revenge; (3) impurity; (4) uncharitable judgment.
3. The positive side. (1) Be merciful; (2) be a peacemaker.
4. Responsible for the saving of others.
5. A perfect standard.

1. *The purpose of civil law is the protection of society.* If we wished to go beyond this, we might ask, "Protection from what?" (1) *Law does not pretend to protect man from the forces of nature.* While tempest and earthquake and tornado have come, like terrible invading armies, and destroyed life and laid waste property, no law, however carefully framed, can insure pro-

tection from them. Only one voice ever spoke to the winds and the sea, and was obeyed. (2) *Law can not protect man from the fury of wild beasts or from the destructive raids of insects.* We may direct our strictest laws toward these creatures, and from the lion to the grasshopper the result will be the same. (3) *The protective function of law seeks to protect man from his own kind.* If all men were perfect in wisdom and goodness, then would law be superfluous, as would also be teaching and exhortation. If the Golden Rule reigned in the hearts of men, then would there be not the slightest need of civil law.

2. In this sermon, *Jesus shows man as he is in wrong relations to his brother*; but he goes deeper than the Decalogue in that he deals with the cause of these wrongs rather than with the outward manifestations. (1) In the code of Christ, anger is classed with murder. While the law of Moses said "Thou shalt not kill," Jesus calls attention to the seething passions of the heart—of which the crime murder is born. John, enlarging upon this, says, "Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer." Even our civil law has taken a leaf from Christ's teaching in dealing with murder. For while it can not punish a man for the mere fact of angry feeling, it does rate the gravity of the crime of taking life by the motive that prompted the deed. (2) Jesus condemns the disposition to seek revenge. While the old law

did not give to men the right to take vengeance, men seem to have assumed that it did. He who taught, "Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you," leaves no place for the idea of "getting even" with those who have done us wrong. (3) The law of purity, according to Jesus, is violated not by deeds alone. He called attention to the harboring of impure thoughts and desires as the real sin, which so often reached the fruition of loathsome deeds. (4) The Sermon on the Mount warns us against uncharitable judgment of others. Jesus never meant that we should not exercise our powers of judgment concerning what we see and hear. The judgment against which he speaks is the putting of the worst possible construction upon things that we do not really know. He would have us give the accused and suspected man the benefit of a doubt.

3. *But the Sermon on the Mount is not wholly negative. It makes plain our positive obligations to others.* (1) The generous grace of mercy is enjoined. It is not enough that we see that men get what is rightfully theirs. The merciful man will pay the needy brother all that is due him, in *the eyes of the law*, and will add to it. He will not insist on punishing those who have put themselves in the place where they seem to merit punishment. (2) The man whom Christ would hold up does not merely keep out of bitter strife himself. He is to use

his powers in stopping strife. The atmosphere of peace is about the man who fills the divine ideal.

4. *Jesus makes man responsible also for the safety of others.* (1) He is to be a light, and, furthermore, a light that makes a business of shining. He would say to his followers, "Guide, warm, cheer! Let the world see your religion, not merely hear about it." (2) He is to save. "Ye are the salt of the earth." We can not exercise our saving function if we do not go where the lost are. Saints shut up in cloisters are as superfluous as is the salt in sealed jars and hidden in dark cellars. The Christian can lose his saving properties by being too saving of himself.

5. *Jesus sets once for all the standard to which we are to climb and by which we are to measure ourselves.* There are few men so faulty that they can not get some satisfaction out of comparing themselves with some one else. We are not to be satisfied because we are assured that we are as free from imperfections as are many who make considerable pretensions at righteousness. The injunction is not "Be ye therefore perfect—even as the preacher or the elder is perfect." The best man can not furnish us a safe standard of perfection. The perfection of the heavenly Father is to be our model.

XV.

A SOLDIER WHO WON HIS DECORATION.

Luke 7: 2-10.

OUTLINE.

1. Prominence given to the story of the centurion. It was not because: (1) He was a Roman officer; (2) nobility was uncommon among such men; (3) he had built a synagogue.

2. He was commended for his faith because: (1) There was national prejudice to be reckoned with; (2) official pride might have hindered; (3) lack of precedent might have kept him from appealing to Jesus; (4) a sense of unworthiness was in the way.

3. Faith secured for the soldier: (1) The life of his servant; (2) the highest encomium from the Master of men.

When we consider the busy life that our Lord led during the three years of his ministry, and the multitudes of people who continually thronged about him, we must conclude that we have only a limited record of the happenings of those three wonderful years. This conclusion immediately forces

us to another one; namely, that there are good reasons why some passages in the ministry are recorded rather than others.

1. *The centurion.* Why did two of the writers of the sacred books choose to relate this story of the healing of a menial in the house of one who was not of the house of Israel, and leave the deeply interesting stories that must be behind many such statements as this: "And he healed many that were sick"? (1) It could not have been due to the high position the centurion held. Palestine was full of Roman soldiers. A country-town mayor would attract as much attention in one of our large cities as would this captain in Palestine, because of his position. (2) It was not because it was such an uncommon thing for a Roman soldier to manifest nobility of character. (3) Neither was it the attitude of this man toward Judaism, and his liberality in helping it in a material way, that causes him to be singled out. Gifts of money, when they represent devotion, are rewarded, but no man could ever demand recognition from God on the ground that he had built a church or founded a library.

2. *The centurion's faith.* Jesus himself set the Roman soldier apart from all others by declaring that his faith was without a parallel. The centurion's faith was remarkable because it was a victory over certain particular difficulties. (1) There was national prejudice to be reckoned with. It

would have been strange indeed if there had not been in the mind of the average Roman a sort of contempt for the Jews. (2) There was the obstacle of official pride. Humility is a difficult grace for one who is in authority. It does not take much in the way of title or position to turn the head of the average person. The mayor of a small city confided to some one that he had felt deeply convicted of his duty under the preaching of an evangelist who had recently held a meeting in the town. The people, however, for whom the meeting was held were mainly poor—not the leading people by any means. “Of course,” he added, “a man in my position couldn’t well afford to get himself mixed up with people of that sort.” (3) Lack of precedent was probably another obstacle to faith. How slavish most of us are to precedent! We are unwilling to venture out first. Jesus had healed many that were sick, it is true, but, so far as our knowledge goes, it was when he had been brought into personal contact with them. In this case faith seems to have devised a new and an untried way. Others believed that Jesus could do again the things they had seen him do. This man believed, not on the strength of such evidence, but because of his personal faith in the unlimited power of Jesus. (4) The soldier triumphed over his own sense of unworthiness. This was no mean obstacle. His subsequent words and action show that it was deep and genuine.

3. *What faith won.* In his victory over many things that opposed, the soldier won: (1) The thing that his heart desired. Jesus did not disappoint the man's expectations. Let us keep in mind that the soldier had ventured all this, not for himself, but for a bondservant. While God undoubtedly helps those who help themselves, we have reason to believe that he reserves the best things for those who help others. (2) He won the approval of the Master. What higher decoration of honor could have been bestowed upon the man than the name that Jesus gave him—the man who had the greatest faith?

XVI.

WHEN A SON WAS GIVEN BACK TO
HIS MOTHER.

Luke 7: 11-16.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Friends in need.

1. An opportune meeting. (1) It brought the bereaved one face to face with the only one who could give her relief; (2) it drew the attention of a multitude of people to the one who had done this mighty work.

2. The compassion of Jesus. (1) The keen sting of bereavement touched his heart; (2) the dead man was the only son of his mother; (3) she was a widow.

3. The miracle. (1) He stopped the burial procession; (2) he spoke to the ear of death; (3) his voice was obeyed.

4. Given back to his mother.

There is a time in the life of nearly every man when, so far as worth is concerned, the whole world seems changed. This time is that of bereavement of those he loves. In such an hour it is nothing to us that those we have called friends are

rich or great or of splendid appearance. Indeed, as the years pass by, and the common experience of sorrow comes to us, we reach the conclusion that the real friend is the one who has been able to come close to us in our days of deep sorrow. Great philosophers and rulers have by their greatness swayed the multitudes. Men have been proud to point to their wise sayings and heroic deeds, but greatness furnishes no solace for the aching heart. Jesus alone has stood this test among those who have been leaders of men.

1. *An opportune meeting.* As we follow Jesus from Capernaum and his meeting with the centurion, what seems at first to be a commonplace fact is recorded. "He went to a city called Nain," we are told. Probably there was some simple reason, perfectly plain to his disciples, why his journeying took this course. But that was not all. The things that to our human vision seem only to "happen" are the working out of God's providences. Jesus and his company might have reached the gate of Nain at some other hour: but no, just at the moment for what followed, the company moving out in its mournful errand, and the company whose center and reason was Jesus, met. the meeting was opportune: (1) Because it put the afflicted woman into touch with the only one who could now do aught to relieve her sad situation. (2) Because Jesus was brought to the attention of these people as

he would probably not have been under other circumstances. Many a one has met the Lord in the hour of bereavement who would never have known him had the sun of happiness continued to shine. While we are not permitted to follow this woman after Jesus met her, who can doubt that she was among those who were led to believe on him because of his mighty works?

2. *Our Lord's compassion.* Jesus did not come into the world to banish physical death. So far as our certain knowledge goes, he exercised his power in bringing the dead back to life but three times. Physical death is not to be looked upon as man's foe. The reasons for Christ's tender compassion are not hard to find. (1) The death of loved ones is an affliction as old as time and yet new to the heart upon which it falls. To say to the bereaved one,

"Your lot is the common lot of all,"

in no way assuages grief. The one who comforts the mourner is not the person who brings to bear logic and philosophy, and says, "It is nothing," but rather the one who recognizes your wound and has compassion—suffers with you. (2) The young man whom death had touched was the only son of his mother. This does not mean that he would have been less dear if there had been many sons, but it did mean that the mother-heart had nothing left. (3) She was a widow. The widow appears in Oriental life

always as an object of special pity. The self-reliant, resourceful woman of the Occident, and especially of our modern life, was unknown. She must be, if there was no near of kin, an object of charity. While this is sometimes true with us, in Bible times widowhood always meant dependence.

3. *The miracle.* The compassion of Jesus always took a practical form. In this case it meant the restoration of the son who was dead. (1) He commanded, first, those who bore the body to its burial. The sad procession was to be turned from its journey to the place of burial, back toward the home that was to be a place of rejoicing. (2) He spoke to the young man, and the ears that had been dead to the voices alike of mourning and love heard his voice. How strikingly typical is this incident of the miracle that has taken place again and again when, at the very gateway to the place of buried hope, the spiritually dead have heard his voice, and have risen to walk in newness of life.

4. *Given back to his mother.* We are told that Jesus gave the young man to his mother. That was not the first time he had been given to her. She had looked for the first time into the face of the son God had given her. Now her joy is of another kind. For a little while she had lost him, but he is hers once more. Our Lord longs to do this for the other mothers whose sons are lost to them—not in death, but in the ways

that have taken them far beyond home and its leadings. How he longs to unbind the poor victim of deadening habits and passions and give him back to his mother, to be her stay and comfort in days to come!

XVII.

A STUDY IN SOILS AND SOULS.

Matt. 13: 1-23.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The wonders of reclaimed lands. The spiritual parallel—the responsibility of the hearer.

1. All soil not alike in condition and in possibilities. (1) The hard ground; (2) the shallow ground, the need of “ploughing and harrowing”; (3) the pre-empted ground, superficial reformation; (4) the good ground, encouraging results.

One of the interesting studies that may be said to be peculiar to our times is that of the reclamation of worthless land. Irrigated land that a few years ago would not have tempted the most foolish buyer at any price has recently brought nearly \$2,000 an acre. Oranges, lemons, apricots, grapes, almonds and countless like products are grown in abundance where once was barren desert. Why? Because of the discovery of some new and wonderful seed and stock for propagation? No; the whole matter resolves itself into this: men have learned the

secret of preparing the soil for plant and seed. When Jesus spoke the parable of the sower he called attention to a spiritual truth that finds its parallel in the natural world. The study in soils turns naturally to a study in souls.

1. *The soil not all alike in condition and in possibilities.* Scientific farming knows not only good ground and poor ground, but also ground that is good for certain purposes and not for others. It knows ground that is not good because of certain kinds of neglect and abuse. In this parable that places responsibility with the hearer, Jesus calls our attention to soil in various conditions.

(1) The hard ground. Jesus probably had in mind the pathways which ran through the fields of the average farmer. Naturally, the seed which falls here is wasted. The hardened surface does not open to receive the seed, therefore it becomes a prey to outside forces. But how does this soil happen to be hard? After the same fashion in which human hearts become hard. Once the stony ground was as rich and mellow as the rest, but the world has so long made it a convenient passway that that which falls upon it never gets below the surface. No wonder the "birds" carry away the seeds that lie on the surface. Satan has his flock of birds at every church door to help the hardened heart to forget what it has heard.

(2) The shallow ground. This has deceived many a sower. Indeed, the first experience with the shallow soil has brought cheer to the heart of many a toiler. There is a quick response; that is cheering enough, but the reason which is by and by revealed puts another color upon the matter. Such people are utterly lacking in conviction. Is the sower in any way to blame? Sometimes. The breaking up of the rocky soil is not always an impossibility. Deep ploughing and harrowing would meet many a discouraging situation. Cutting men to the heart is not, however, a desirable proceeding for the sower, and we are not surprised that he seldom resorts to it.

(3) The pre-empted ground. This may give little idea of the difficulties it really presents. The thorns and thistles had been cut down, but the roots remained. Here we see a picture of the heart that has not surrendered its old lusts and passions. The exterior reformation looks very well, but it will not last if that is all there is of it. The man who ostensibly comes to Christ, but makes mental reservations concerning what he will not give up, will find all too soon that the older and stronger growth has been too much for the new.

(4) The good ground. Thank God that the soil is not all hard or shallow or thorny! We have but to turn backward in the history of the growth of the kingdom to assure ourselves of this. "The good and

honest hearts" have never been wanting. Again and again it has looked as though there was to be no more harvest. When the leaders of the faith were put to death, its assemblies dispersed, and the word of God was burned and trampled upon, it has seemed to be the end, but there were hearts in which the seed was cherished. In such there sprang up the most shining and unworldly virtues. The Christ-life of love and sacrifice has been reproduced wherever the seed has fallen. Men receiving the Word have been moved to live and die and spend themselves for others.

XVIII.

WHENCE HATH IT TARES?

Matt. 13 : 24-43.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Christ's explanation of the parable. Deals with mighty principles.

1. Evil men not a chance product.
2. The seed may remain hidden for a long while after it is sown.
3. The harvest of evil sowing always a surprise to those who must take the consequences.
4. The unguarded moment the tempter's opportunity.
5. Sowing good seed not enough.
6. The harvest may be so far off from the sowing as to deceive the sower.
7. God will deal justly with all men.

Christ did not leave his hearers in doubt concerning the meaning of the parable of the tares. They might have speculated variously as to what the wheat, the tares, the field and the enemy stood for. There are some things which we, with so much of demonstration behind us, are able to understand as it was not possible for them

to understand them. For instance, the statement that the field is the world could not have suggested to them that which is plain to all the church of our time—that God's chosen field for the planting and growth of the truth is not just one place, or certain places, but everywhere.

Usually, the seed in the parable stands for good or evil. In this parable it stands for good men and evil men. When we stop to consider the matter we see that there is really no difference, since all there is of good in the world is embodied in good men, and all there is of evil is that which exists in evil human beings. We would never know the meaning of vice or virtue if we did not make their acquaintance in the people who possess these qualities.

1. *Evil men are not a chance product.* If they were, Christ might have represented the tares as coming forth, the result of "spontaneous generation." When the servants of the householder saw tares, they did not decide that they had just "happened"; they asked how the tares happened to be among the wheat. We condemn the credulity of the man who denies a first cause behind what he sees in the material world, but he is little less reasonable than are we when we practically ignore the fact that evil in our own lives and in the lives of others does not come by chance.

2. *Seeds of evil sown in human hearts may remain hidden for a long while after*

they begin to do their injurious work. For awhile all seemed to be well in the field where wheat and tares were growing together. It is often a good while before you and I become conscious of tares that have grown up among the wheat in our hearts. When did the tares of worldliness supplant those of grace? Only God knows that. God keep us from letting the enemy get close enough to us to sow his seed!

3. *The harvest that comes from evil seed always surprises those who have to take the consequences.* When Paul counsels men not to deceive themselves concerning the certainty of the harvest of him who sows to his flesh, he must have had this common form of self-deception in mind. The servants who asked, "Whence hath it tares?" asked a natural question, but as much can not always be said of our surprised questionings concerning the presence of evil fruits in our lives.

4. *The unguarded moment is the tempter's opportunity.* If it be true that sowing tares in the newly sown field was a common form of taking revenge upon an enemy, then the servants were to blame for not watching the field until the danger period had passed. Be that as it may, you and I are not ignorant concerning the necessity of eternal vigilance if we would keep ourselves from harboring the seeds of evil.

5. *While sowing the field well with good seed is a pre-emptive measure, that is*

not enough. The question, "Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field?" is equivalent to a declaration. The servants had been the master's agents, and had put the good seed in the soil themselves. Was not that enough? No, it was not. Nor is it enough that you and I sometimes listen to good counsel and often read good books. There is a part of us that needs to be guarded. The young man who goes to church on Sunday may accompany loose companions to the theater on Tuesday, and look upon things that will stay with him forever afterward. He may listen to the coarse stories of men in the office when he ought to get out of their way. The fact that good seed has been sown will not keep the tares from coming up.

6. *The harvest may be so far away from the sowing as to sometimes lead men to believe that the law of sowing and reaping has been lifted.* A young man, who seemed to be particularly fitted to be a candidate on a reform ticket, was rejected because of the past that had been practically forgotten. "He is the cleanest and best man I know," said one friend, "but back in his past is a soiled, blackened page. It has been forgotten by most people, but the moment he steps forward as a candidate for office it will be brought up against him." This was as true as it was deplorable. "But what of it?" you say. "Shall we discourage men from forsaking their sins because they

can not wholly get away from them?" By no means. The lesson is for those who are still at the parting of the way.

7. *God will deal justly with all men.* In our outbursts of what we are pleased to call "righteous indignation" we have said of some men, "Why does God let them live?" Many an impatient reformer has been ready to hurl a Jonah-like prophecy against flagrant workers of iniquity (but not with equal authority for doing so); and, Jonah-like, has become impatient with the Almighty because the offenders were allowed to go on living. The lesson here is that we must leave judgment to the only One who really knows man. Let us not make the mistake of applying this part of the parable to the purging of the church of those who bring disgrace upon it. Paul treats of this later on. A man who rails against "prohibition fanatics" thus misuses the teachings of Christ. "The saloon is a tare," he argues, "therefore we must let it alone." This much is plain: God will use no violence for the purpose of cutting off evil men from the world, but this gives no one the least reason for concluding that such men are to escape the natural consequences of their evil living.

XIX.

WITH JESUS THROUGH THE
STORM.

Matt. 8 : 23-27.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The settings of the story: a day of strenuous work and of public and private teaching.

1. The weary sleeper. (1) A manifestation of the genuineness of his humanity; (2) the wearing nature of his work.

2. An unexpected storm. Why it was permitted to come, since (1) He who afterward quelled the storm was with them; (2) they were following Jesus.

3. The disciples. (1) They were frightened at the fury of the storm; (2) they were impatient with Jesus; (3) they were distrustful.

4. They were short-sighted. (1) They had forgotten past manifestations of his power; (2) he was sharing the same danger that they were.

5. The effect of his words. The storm ceased; the fearful were made confident.

After the strenuous day of public teaching, and after the inquiry-meeting that was

almost certain to follow his public addresses, Jesus, in company with his disciples, starts across the sea. Almost immediately, we may imagine, he sinks down to take the needed rest in sleep.

1. *The weary sleeper.* To those of us who have viewed Jesus largely in his capacity of divine Teacher and a master of disease and death, coming upon him for the first time in the role of a man resting as any man might rest after severe toil, some thoughts are suggested: (1) We see manifested the genuineness of his humanity. We rob Christ of his claim that he has shared human pain and weariness if we make his assumption of humanity such in name only. The body of our Lord was a real body, with nerves and muscles subject to the same conditions that control your body and mine. (2) Christ's work was hard and wearing. While his physical hardships were real, they were the smaller part of the burden which he took upon himself. There is a keenness of suffering and a supreme exhaustion which is known only to the man who gives his heart and soul to those for whom he labors.

2. *The unexpected storm.* If we look at this incident superficially, there are several questions which present themselves: (1) Since Jesus had power over nature, why did he permit the storm to come at all? In the first place, this question, a thoroughly characteristic one, is not legitimate. We must leave the answer with Him who owns, and

therefore has the right to direct, the world and all that it contains. Perhaps the disciples needed, just at this time, the experience that came with the storm. We know, at least, that it was worth all it cost them. (2) Why did the storm come while they were following their Master? Does obedience promise us exemption from hardships? No, for God has promised to bring his own through trials which they must share as a part of the common lot. The hardness that the Christian endures is nowhere set forth as being punitive, but rather as disciplinary. Jonah got into trouble by running away from duty; doing the Lord's bidding has also plunged men into difficulty, yet there is a radical difference between the man who, in trouble, can trust God and the one who has no right to trust.

3. *The fearful disciples.* Two emotions seem to have stirred the disciples: (1) Fear filled their hearts. The storm was terrifying. In such moments as this, man realizes the limitations of his power. Those who can face their enemies in battle, and hope to conquer or outwit them, realize that neither of these things is possible when they face the angry and destructive elements. (2) They were impatient with Jesus for not immediately coming to their aid. In this they exhibited a common trait. We not only want God to come to our need, but we want the relief-ship to arrive according to the schedule we have fixed. The reproachful

"Lord, carest thou not that we perish?" sounds natural indeed. Because the Lord does not fall in with our plans, how quick we are to conclude that he has forgotten us!

4. *The disciples were short-sighted.* (1) They should have remembered the manifestations of his power which they had witnessed; (2) they should have considered that he shared with them whatever danger existed. Sometimes we become reproachful and impatient because God allows evil to rage and seemingly endanger his cause. "If God really cares," we say, "why does he not interfere?" My brother, when you are disposed to worry about the things over which you have no control, stop and reflect that it is his cause that is being tried, and that he cares more than you can possibly care about the triumphant outcome.

5. *The miracle and its effect.* By the miracle, Jesus demonstrated his power over the forces of nature. As man by the exercise of his superior knowledge knows how to reach out and arrest the falling body that must otherwise be drawn to the earth, so he, without whom nothing was made that was made, applied a higher law and the storm ceased. The greater effect was not the calming of the storm. Out of that experience the disciples came with a new conception of their Master. They proved what he was to them

"Where the storms are sweeping,
And the dark waters flow."

XX.

A MAN WHO BURNED HIS BRIDGES
BEHIND HIM.

Luke 5 : 27-39.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The disregard of Jesus for popular prejudice. The parting of the ways with one of his disciples.

1. A notable occasion. Matthew probably actuated by several motives. (1) A desire to honor the great Teacher; (2) the wish to definitely commit himself in the presence of his old associates.

2. The company. (1) Jesus the guest of honor; (2) men who were what Matthew had been before Jesus called him; (3) the scribes and Pharisees as onlookers.

3. A question answered. (1) Jesus divided the world into but two classes; (2) he declared that he had come to save one of these—sinners; (3) he gave them to understand that there was one class he did not come to save.

When our Lord called Matthew the publican, he stepped aside from the path that the conventionally religious would have

marked out for him. During the few months that seem to have elapsed since Matthew gave up his business to become a follower of the Man of Galilee, Jesus had not been far from Capernaum, the home of Matthew. There had been no necessity for an actual separation between Matthew and his home and friends.

1. *A notable occasion.* Matthew made a feast before his departure with the great Teacher. Several motives probably prompted the act. (1) He desired to honor the One who called him. The ardent believer will find many ways of confessing the Lord before men. (2) He wanted to make his own position clear to his old associates. One of the strong safeguards which the young Christian may throw about himself is that of definitely committing himself in the presence of others. Secret discipleship makes public disloyalty easy.

2. *The company.* (1) Jesus was the guest of honor. How different would many of our social affairs be if this were the case. (2) The publicans and sinners were there. While Matthew had forsaken the old life, he had the love for his friends that led him to seek to draw them into the presence of the great Teacher. Jesus had not despised *him*, therefore he had no fear of offending Jesus by bringing them into his presence. (3) The scribes and Pharisees were there also, but not to partake of the feast. They belonged to the ancient order of faultfinders.

They had a precious opportunity, but they did not see it. They might have been drinking in his gracious words or have answered some of the weighty questions that perplexed the times.

3. *A question answered.* The Lord knew of the sneering questions they asked of his disciples, and answered them in such a way that the critics must have regretted that they had spoken. (1) Jesus divided the world into two classes: the sinners and the righteous. While there are degrees in sickness, one can not be both sick and well. This is true spiritually as well as otherwise. (2) He proclaimed himself to be the healer of sinful men. If they accepted this, then his association with sinners was justified. The physician who refused to go among the sick would be a travesty on his profession. (3) There is one class for whom he offers to do nothing. He can not save a man from his sins if the man is not a sinner. We may say that all men have sinned. True; but here God takes us at our own valuation. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

XXI.

WHEN FAITH BROUGHT RESULTS.

Matt. 9:18-26.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The settings of the story.

1. The leveling effect of sorrow.

2. A distinguished man. (1) He interrupts the teacher; (2) a contrasting call—from the house of feasting to the house of mourning.

3. Delay that was no misfortune. (1) Another reaps the benefit; (2) the ruler reassured.

4. Faith rewarded.

We find Jesus at the house of Matthew amid festal surroundings. In the midst of his discourse, one comes to him upon a somber mission.

1. *The leveling effect of sorrow.* The man who interrupts Jesus is no mendicant—no rude peasant—but a man of standing and authority. We recall the sneering though anxious question of his enemies, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" They had. Here is one whose coming was an answer. Whatever may have been his

prejudice against this Jesus of Nazareth, his anxiety overshadows everything else. Nothing is like sorrow for breaking down the artificial barriers men have set up.

2. *A ruler who was powerless.* (1) He interrupts Christ's discourse. If men realized the condition of their souls, there would be some interrupted sermons—sermons interrupted by those who desired to flee to the one place of hope. (2) He declares his faith. He believes now that he is in the presence of One who has power over death. "Even now," he says. So far as human means are concerned, it is too late.

3. *The plea regarded.* (1) Jesus set about meeting the faith-filled plea of the ruler, but there was the crowd! Every moment of the day must have been trying to the father—it was not in vain. One touched His garment and was made whole. God's delays are never purposeless—never because he has lost sight of our need. (2) The voices of the mourners would have filled a less courageous soul with despair, but the ruler refused to give up.

4. *Faith rewarded.* "Fear not, only believe," Jesus said to the father, and from what followed we see that he did believe. In the presence of those who did not scoff at his promise, Jesus brought the dead girl back to life. When the ruler left his home to seek Jesus, the girl was still alive. Perhaps he had heard the equivalent to "while

there is life, there is hope." Jesus taught the man a more wonderful truth. To the believer this also is true: *In Christ, where there is death, there also is hope.*

XXII.

A GOING CONCERN.

Matt. 10: 1-22.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The church a dynamic force. A forecasting of the new order.

1. With God, calling means sending. Prayers answered by those who offer them.

2. The Lord equips those he sends. (1) Power to work miracles: (*a*) To convince their hearers; (*b*) to confirm their own faith; (2) they were to give with the freedom with which God had given to them.

3. The field of service. (1) Its limitations; (2) preaching and going.

4. They were to avoid hindrances to efficiency. (1) For their own sakes; (2) for the sake of the people to whom they were sent.

5. They were not to be surprised at rejection and ill treatment.

6. Responsibility must rest with those to whom they went.

One of the favorite sayings of Robert Ingersoll was, "The church must go." So far as the statement goes, it is true. One of

the largest things about the church is its dynamic quality. It must go, and keep on going, else it is not the church. When Jesus sent men to those who need the gospel, their sending was a forecast of what was to come after the kingdom was set up. Some one has said that, while Christ's followers believe that the people ought to go to church, they also believe that the church ought to go to the people.

1. *With God, calling means sending.* Jesus called the twelve to him, then he sent them. It is of some significance that the men who were told to pray for laborers were sent out to answer their own prayers.

2. *God, who calls men to service, equips them for it.* (1) The twelve were given power to work miracles. (a) This was to the end that their message might be believed; the miracles were their credentials. (b) For their own sakes. Confidence and courage increased when God set the seal of his approval upon them; (2) their ministry was to be measured by God's equipment of them. "Freely ye have received, freely give."

3. *The field of service.* (1) The work was to have its limitations. While it meant going, it also meant refraining from going. God limits his workmen, not because he cares for some fields and is indifferent toward others, but because he wants their labor to be invested where it will count for the most. (2) They were not to wait for

set places and circumstances in order to begin their work. Preaching did not necessarily mean churchly surroundings. It did not mean that they must always pause in their journey. "As ye go, preach!" The very journey was to be a sermon. Men and women who are busy in the shop and in the market, or in the home or the school, might well take this to themselves. As you go, preach. Some of the most effective preaching is to be done as we go.

4. *The preachers were to go unhindered.* Some of the things the twelve were forbidden to take with them may have seemed to them to be necessary. There was more than one reason why they were to carry neither money nor food nor extra clothing. (1) This was for their own sake. They needed to realize that they were God's men and that they were to look to him for what they needed. (2) This was also for the sake of others. Those to whom they went were more likely to think well of the message if they had had fellowship in caring for the messengers. The people and the ministry need this tie which means mutual dependence and mutual responsibility. (3) The messengers could not do their best work if they were burdened by the care of baggage. During the Boxer trouble, when the American soldier won the respect of the world for his bravery and his efficiency, it was said that the difference between him and some of the others was that while the former reduced

his encumbrances to a minimum, the latter often insisted on carrying even their bathtubs with them.

5. *The difficulties were not hidden from them.* The Lord always deals fairly with men. He wanted these whom he had sent forth to know that they had been honored in being allowed to become bearers of the message, but he also wanted them to know that there would be hardships along with blessings and rewards. He told them of the false witnesses and the scourgings that were to be their portion.

6. *The responsibility must rest with the hearer.* It was the part of the twelve to give men the message, but beyond this they could do nothing.

XXIII.

JESUS AND THE BREAD-LINE.

Matt. 14: 13-21.

OUTLINE.

1. Toilers who needed rest.
 2. Sheep that needed a shepherd. (1) They were ready to follow any leader who held out the least hope to them; (2) their greater need attended to first.
 3. The hungry who needed bread. Different ways of viewing the problem: (1) The disciples would leave them to look out for themselves; (2) they see no possibilities in the loaves and fishes; (3) Jesus takes the burden upon himself.
 4. Working with God. To get results there must be co-operation: (1) On the part of the multitude; (2) of the disciples.
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1. *Toilers who needed rest.* Away from the busy scenes where he had done mighty works and where the crowds had pressed upon him, we see our Lord taking his way to the deserted region with only his disciples to bear him company. This incident, from first to last, seems to show us the attitude of Jesus toward human need. Spir-

itual downfall is often due to a disregard of the injunction to go apart awhile and rest.

2. *Sheep that needed a shepherd.* While Jesus sought the desert place with his disciples that he and they might find rest, that rest was shortened because of his recognition of another need. There is no sign of impatience when he sees the multitudes who followed him coming to the place where he was resting. (1) Their very following him to this place showed him that they longed for some one to lead and guide them. Those who ostensibly held the place of shepherds had been untrue to their trust. (2) Jesus supplied this need first. He taught them the truths of the kingdom of God; further, on comes the feeding with actual bread.

3. *The hungry who needed bread.* Five thousand men, besides women and children! Here was a bread-line the like of which has probably never before or since been seen. Both Jesus and his disciples recognized the fact that these people actually needed just now, before everything else, a good meal; but notice how differently they viewed this fact. (1) The disciples recognized this need, but would dispose of it by throwing responsibility back upon the people themselves. In their suggestion that the people be sent out to skirmish for themselves, there is an implied suggestion that they came here of their own accord and will now have to

put up with the results of their improvidence. (2) They see no possibility in the scanty store on hand. How like ourselves is their petulant question concerning the few loaves and fishes, "But what are they among so many?" It is because of our contemptuous attitude toward our small gifts and possessions that nearly every good cause suffers most. (3) Jesus makes himself responsible for the needs of the people, even though it is the result of their own thoughtlessness.

4. *Working together with God.* Jesus realizes the possession of the divine power to make sufficient the loaves and fishes of the little lad, but he asks, as he ever does, for co-operation: (1) On the part of the multitude. They are bidden to sit down. As is sometimes the case with God's greatest blessings, man can do nothing more than to get into a receptive attitude, but he must do that. (2) The disciples: They were to have their part. It was in the performance of the command, "Give them to eat," that the wonderful thing took place. It was not theirs to ask, "How is this ever going to hold out?" They couldn't answer the question. The "how" was the Lord's part of the problem. If they had refused to go forward, they themselves would have gone to bed hungry, as there was not enough to satisfy the appetite of one person. The end of the story is like the end of every one of Christ's wonderful works. It was a com-

plete success. Those who ate of his bounty that night were satisfied. Those who eat of his bounty never find anything less than satisfaction.

XXIV.

FAITH WITHOUT THE PALE.

Matt. 15: 21-28.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Why Jesus sometimes went away from his field of labor.

1. An unexpected visitor. (1) She had not been invited; (2) she had received no promise; (3) her presence was distasteful to his followers.

2. A great motive. (1) Others; (2) no place else to go; (3) she sought one who had helped others.

3. A severe test. (1) Lack of response to her plea; (2) a reminder of the limitations of his earthly ministry; (3) a humiliating declaration.

4. Faith triumphant. She received her blessing according to the measure of the faith she brought.

5. A contrast.

Now and then, in the history of the world, men have claimed to rise to the point of being no longer under the dominion of physical limitations. They have professed indifference to cold and hunger, and bodily

pain. Jesus made no such profession. We are frankly told that he was hungry and thirsty and tired. Extreme weariness led him more than once to leave those over whom his heart yearned. Whether such was the case in the instance of his withdrawal to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, we have no means of knowing. We know, however, that his going was not for the purpose of laboring among the people of that region. He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The work of gathering in the sheep "not of this fold" was to be taken up by those who came after him.

1. *An unexpected visitor.* From the standpoint of the times, the visit of the Canaanitish woman was not a thing to be expected. (1) She had not been invited. In his own country, Jesus had invited the weary and burdened to make him their burden-bearer. Such could not have been the case in the present instance. (2) There was no promise for her. We sometimes make a merit of having taken God at his word in accepting his blessings. This woman had faith in the graciousness of Jesus even though it had not been offered to her. (3) Her presence was obnoxious to his followers. Brave indeed was she to have come and present her plea in the face of impatient words and cold, forbidding glances. The disciples made her position doubly difficult. They wanted Jesus to get rid of her in some way. Their selfish complaint, "She

crieth after *us*," reminds us of some modern church-members, who manifest the same spirit when disreputable specimens of humanity would attach themselves to the church and share its blessings.

2. *A great motive.* There was something powerful that caused this woman to come to Jesus. (1) She came in behalf of another. A timid woman who would flee from a shadow would face a wild beast in the defense of her child. We are at our highest and best when we are enlisted in behalf of others. (2) There was no other possible help for this woman in her troubles. (3) She knew he had helped others. Whoever comes to Christ now may know, if he will, what he has done for the many who have sought him.

3. *A severe test.* The woman's faith was, in several ways, put to a severe test. (1) At first he was silent. The lack of response was discouraging, but it did not daunt her faith. (2) He reminds her of a disheartening fact—that he was not sent save to his own nation. (3) He answers her in a way that was calculated to touch her pride. The woman's readiness to come into his favor, even in the humble character of a dog, means that she had risen above trifles. "Don't use the word 'sinner' when you give the invitation," an officer of the church said to the preacher; "people don't like to be called 'sinners'." "Well," said the preacher, "if a man isn't ready to own

that he is a sinner, he isn't ready to come to Christ."

4. *Faith triumphant.* Jesus told the woman that because of her faith she should have what she asked. She herself furnished the measure into which her blessing was to be poured. Much as we are inclined to lose sight of the fact, it is for us to say how much, in the way of blessing, we shall receive of the Lord.

5. *A contrast.* While there are some parallels between ourselves and this woman, there are also some striking contrasts in our favor. (1) She was outside the pale of gospel blessings: you and I are included in the "whosoever" of promise. (2) We have been invited to bring our troubles to the Lord. (3) The real disciples rejoice when a needy one seeks the Saviour.

When men take up the song of rejoicing over the return of the lost, the distance between men and angels becomes less marked in our eyes,

XXV.

THE ROCK THAT ENDURES.

Matt. 16: 13-20.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The importance of the verdict.

1. A minor question. (1) Ready to answer the impersonal question; (2) vague conclusions.

2. The supreme question. Confession of belief in Christ: (1) Clears our own minds; (2) gives courage to others.

3. Why Peter's confession was commended. (1) This truth the foundation of our belief because (a) no man could save the souls of other men; (b) accepting the fact of his Sonship means acknowledging his authority.

4. *The Rock of Ages—Jesus the only Lord and Saviour.*

5. The assurance.

The most thrilling moment in the history of a case in court is when, after the evidence is in, the case is submitted to the jury for a verdict. For many months Jesus had been practically on trial before the court

of his own people. Bit by bit he had brought forward the evidence that he was the One of whom the prophets had written. Now, for the first time, he asks for a verdict.

1. *The minor question.* Of the two questions which our Lord asked his disciples, the one of lesser importance came first. What "everybody" is saying is not always an index to the truth. (1) The disciples were ready enough to answer this question about how others stood. Most of us find it easier to define the religious convictions of others than we do to declare our own. (2) There was a lack of definiteness in the conclusions of the multitude. All of these verdicts, if they were honest ones, displayed the woeful blindness of the Jews. Any one of Christ's declarations concerning himself would have made these views faulty. He was either the divine Son of God or he was a pretender—not a prophet.

2. *The great question.* Jesus comes now to the greatest question of all to these men. While it is important what attitude our friends and acquaintances maintain toward Christ, the most important thing with you and me is the question which concerns ourselves. Confession is important to the individual because: (1) It clears our ideas. We may not have paused before to sound ourselves. The direct question often shows where we stand, and reveals duty. (2) It is a message of courage and decision to those who hear our declaration.

3. *Why Peter's confession was commended.* (1) The fact of Christ's divine Sonship is at the bottom of our belief because (a) we could not have a human Saviour; (b) if he were aught else, his great promises would be valueless. (c) To accept the fact of his Sonship means to acknowledge his authority and his supremacy.

4. *The Rock of the ages.* The sublimity of Christ's words concerning the confession of Peter grows upon man with the passing of the ages. Is it strange that in that dark time when the spiritual house seemed to be tottering under the sweeping tide of grossness and evil ambition, the great truth was lost sight of and a man was given the place of supreme authority? Did Jesus say that Peter was to be the rock on which the church was to be built, and did he give to the fisherman the key of dictatorship? Suppose we go to Peter himself for our answer. Turn to Acts and see for yourself how Peter interpreted his position. Do we find him assuming authority above others? No. Hear him as he declares that Christ has become the head of the corner, as he says that there is no other name given under heaven or among men whereby we must be saved. Peter preached Christ just as any humble preacher of the gospel preaches him to-day.

5. *The assurance.* Along with his declaration concerning the church's foundation, Jesus gave an assurance which was to be

the heritage of the church throughout the ages. During the dark years when the tide of corruption and superstition swept over the church it looked as though the gates of hell had really prevailed against it. But God had not forgotten his promise, nor should the church of to-day forget it. When foes arise it little becomes us to hang our heads, and give up to discouragement and fear. There shall not fail one good word of all that he has promised. The gates of death shall not prevail against his church.

XXVI.

A MOUNTAIN-TOP EXPERIENCE.

Matt. 17: 1-14.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The settings.

1. The privilege side of discipleship.
 2. Jesus the end of the law and the prophets.
 3. The mountain-top not the disciple's abiding-place. (1) A creditable preference; (2) the call of the valley.
 4. Hear ye Him!
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It has been a matter of surprise to some that, while Jesus sought men to enlist in his service, he spoke often of the trials into which service would sometimes lead. This, however, was never represented to be the whole of discipleship. We remember that, directly after Peter had made the great confession, Jesus began to tell his disciples something of the dark scenes that lay before them. Following close upon this there came to some of them a glimpse of the glory that is one day to be revealed.

1. *The privilege side of discipleship.*
In a sense, there is no other side. We know

that at the beginning many counted it a privilege to suffer reproach for the name of Christ. But if the Christian must sometimes suffer hardness unknown to those who have not taken up the cross, so has he the privilege of entering into joys that the others can not know. These three were chosen from among the rest: (a) Probably because they were best fitted to receive the things to be revealed. (b) Because they were to particularly need this experience in the stress of days to come.

2. *Christ the end of the law and the prophets.* God has sometimes chosen striking and startling ways of impressing truth upon the minds of men. The appearance of these two, whose names were held in reverence by every devout Jew, had its deep purpose, yet in this vision the worthies of the old dispensation are superseded by Him who came as a fulfillment of all that they had ever taught. Instead of Moses, there was to be He whose coming the rites of the old way foreshadowed. There would be no more need of the prophet when the thing of which the prophets wrote had really come.

3. *The mountain-top not the disciple's abiding-place.* We do not wonder at Peter's incoherent speech in the presence of this glory. The wonder is that he could speak at all. We are told that he did not realize what he was saying. His proposal was impractical, but we can hardly say that it was

unnatural. (1) It was creditable to Peter that he wanted to stay in this heavenly company. He is doubtless a mistaken, impractical Christian who would desire to remain forever in some sweetly spiritual gathering of those whose thoughts are not of things on the earth, yet one of carnal mind would not desire such a thing. (2) While the communion of saints in heavenly places is uplifting, the disciple of the Lord has his duties down in the murky valley.

"I said, 'Let me walk in the fields.'

God said, 'No, walk in the town.'

I said, 'There are no flowers there.'

He said, 'No flowers, but a crown.'

I said, 'But the sky is black.'

There is smoke and bustle and din.'

He wept as he brought me back,

And said, 'There is more; there is sin.'"

4. "*Hear ye him!*" The command, "Hear ye him," seemed scarcely to be needed now by these followers who gladly hung upon his every word. But the day was fast drawing near when they should be brought to the test. A few years, and we see these same men in the midst of the church, striving to lead a people who are beginning to be divided in their allegiance. Some are still listening to Moses, some to the prophets. How clear must have been to these, then, the meaning of this vision. Whatever men may say, the voice out of the cloud speaks. "Hear ye him." What a rebuke is there here for the men who have risen since then, and claimed the ear of

the church with their creeds and canons. Above the jangling voices of the ecclesiastical leaders comes the clear note which sets at rest the bewildered mind. What man may have to say is to be weighed in the light of truth revealed by the Son of God. *Hear ye him!*

XXVII.

WHEN SATAN COMES OUT AHEAD.

Mark 9: 14-29.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Doing the impossible.

1. Trouble after triumph. (1) The afflicted boy; (2) the troubled father; (3) the unsuccessful disciples. (a) They were separated from their Leader; (b) they were beset by faultfinders; (c) the church that is being baffled by Satan.

2. Needed lesson. (1) The people were unreasonable; (2) the father who only half believed; (3) the disciples had evidently forgotten to pray and to depend on God.

3. The secret of failure and the secret of success. (1) Lack of faith in the outcome; (2) lack of dependence upon God.

If we were to set down in writing the achievements of men in any particular line of endeavor, we would find that the greater number of these achievements had been, at some time or other, declared to be impossible. Our own experience and the experience of others ought to lead us to be cau-

tious about arriving at the conclusion that anything which ought to be done can not be done.

Concerning the carrying out of anything in which God has pledged his help, failure ought always to be understood to mean our own failure to comply with conditions.

1. *Trouble after triumph.* While the hearts of the three disciples, whose privilege it had been to go up into the mountain of glory with the Lord, no doubt cried out,

"My willing soul would stay in such a frame as this,"

it was not best that they should do so. From the heights of shining glory, they descended into the valley, where there were darkness and sin. Three types of need demanded the attention of the Lord. (1) The afflicted boy. Bound by that terrible and mysterious malady of which we know but little, mind, body and soul seem to have been writhing in terrible captivity. We may well believe that the loving heart of our Lord was touched by the sight. (2) The troubled father. In a sense, his suffering was even more acute than that of his son. That one who can suffer for others has a heart that can sound the depth of human pain. The picture of the desperate, kneeling father is touching indeed. His love was the sort that would have gladly offered self to save the one he loved. (3) The unsuccessful disciple. These must have hailed with relief, mingled with shame, the

return of Jesus. There are certain extenuating circumstances, though they were to blame for their lack of faith. (a) They were separated from their Leader. (b) The enemies of Christ had beset them with taunting questions. No doubt these disciples who tried, and could not, had sympathy for the distressed father and his afflicted son, but in the presence of friends and foes they failed. (c) One looking upon the scene is reminded of the ghastly spectacle sometimes witnessed, of men perishing while the church confesses its powerlessness to help those bound by the torturing bond of sin. Many a heavy-hearted Christian is saying to God, as he beholds the inroads of Satan where the kingdom should rule, "Why can we not cast him out?"

2. *Some needed lessons.* Jesus takes advantage of the situation and remonstrates with (1) the multitude. The carping crowd, after all of the mighty works they had witnessed, were still demanding a sign of his authority. Their tribe, alas! has not yet run out. The men who are demanding signs to-day are those who are shutting their eyes to infallible proofs. (2) The father brings a half-developed faith. Even in the agony of desire that his son may be healed, he acknowledges his unbelief. (3) The disciples. Christ's words concerning the impotency of those who lack faith applied most to those of whom most was to have been expected.

3. *The secret of failure and the secret of success.* When Jesus was alone with his disciples he spoke plainly to them concerning their failure. It was at least a favorable sign that they wished to fathom the cause of their failure. The cure of the boy was complete, and father and son had gone on their way rejoicing; but the disciples, now alone with their Lord, ask anxiously, "Why could not we cast him out?" Jesus answers plainly: (1) Because of your unbelief. Unbelief has blighted many a work and worker. No one who lacks belief can ever do great things. (2) Lack of dependence on God. Christ's answer lays bare certain things concerning these disciples. They had forgotten the source of their strength. The disciples who minimize the importance of prayer have reason, sooner or later, to wonder why they do not succeed. No church is great that is not a soul-saving church. Its buildings may be splendid and its members influential in society and in the market-place, but it is not great if it is not doing the work for which it was called forth. The church is to go on its mission of bearing the light of the gospel, and while it is to strengthen its own stakes, this is never for its own sake. Endowed churches, splendid buildings, impressive "services" which are after all not services, but performances, may attract the multitudes, but they do not constitute a real church. Jesus tells how great things are to be done in the kingdom of

God. The mountains are nothing to the heart of faith. Jesus said, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Believeth what? Not in his own devices and plans, but in the promises of God. He who thus places his trust will not follow after unreasonable and vague lights, nor will his end be other than one of triumph.

XXVIII.

TEAM-WORK THAT BROUGHT
RESULTS.

Luke 10: 1-24.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The settings.

1. The need of laborers.
 2. The worker's preparation.
 3. Dependent workers. (1) Upon each other; (2) upon the people to whom they were sent; (3) upon God.
 4. Workers with but one object. They were to avoid whatever would take time and thought from their mission. (1) Salutations; (2) the burden of baggage.
 5. The hearers. (1) The message entailed responsibility upon those to whom it was taken; (2) rejecting the messenger meant rejecting the one who sent them forth.
 6. The return. (1) It was joyful; (2) they were eager to report their success in the encounter with evil.
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Wise men throughout the centuries have written and discoursed concerning the value of time. Jesus taught its value by

his life. He was the greatest economist that ever lived in that he put into three years what, even aside from his miracles, has never been accomplished by man in the full fourscore years. All through his ministry, and especially during its latter months, he shows that he was pressed upon by the feeling that the time was short. The seventy were sent on their mission that his first, and in many cases his only, visit to the cities of Perea might count for the most.

1. *The need of laborers.* While the laborers far outnumbered those who were sent forth earlier in his ministry, they were not to be considered sufficient for the work to be done. They were to go forth, praying that God would send more laborers into the vineyard. Sometimes among men there is a desire to restrict the number of laborers, that wages may be kept up. It has never been so with those who labor to win heavenly values.

2. *The worker's preparation.* These men were not to go out under any misapprehension of what they were likely to receive. The seal of one of the first foreign missionary societies had upon it the picture of an ox. On one side was the plow, on the other the altar. Beneath the picture was the inscription, "Ready for Either." Jesus tells his men that they are to be ready for whatever comes, even though it be danger and death. They were not to demand sumptuous fare and luxurious quarters.

Whatever was set before them, they were to accept, not as charity, but as that which rightfully fell to the laborer.

3. *Dependent laborers.* The men to do this work must be men of faith. If they could have seen plainly worked out just how they were to be taken care of, there would have been little room for faith. In their very dependence humility was to be encouraged. (1) They were dependent on one another. Their being sent forth two by two was a sign that they were not sufficient unto themselves. They needed each other. (2) They were dependent on the people to whom they went. (3) They were dependent upon God. The moment the laborer forgets that his mission is not his, but the Lord's who sent him, then does he become unfit for the work. God does not take delight in humiliating men, but he does want them to remember that they are not sufficient of themselves. Their sufficiency is of God.

4. *Whole-hearted laborers.* The seventy were to give themselves unreservedly to the duty before them. (1) They were not to stop for needless salutations by the way. When we consider what Oriental salutations meant, we scarcely need to stop here for an explanation. Jesus certainly did not teach them to be discourteous. Note the beautiful and loving salutation with which they were to greet those to whom they went. There was time for preaching as they went, but not time for lengthy formalities. (2)

They were not to be burdened with luggage. In addition to the feature of dependence, there was the freedom from the care of extra coats and shoes and wallets which was to be thought of.

5. *The hearers.* It was a simple message which had been given to these seventy, but those who heard it knew what it signified.

(1) The coming of the message entailed responsibility upon those that heard it. It always does. Some short-sighted people have opposed the carrying of the gospel to the heathen for this very reason, yet common honesty tells us that we have no right to withhold the gospel from a man because he may not profit by it. Every man has a right to the chance to make the best of himself. (2) Rejecting the messengers meant rejecting the One who sent them forth. It means that still.

6. *The return.* We have no details concerning this campaign, but we have the only thing that counts after all, and that is the results. Cost is a trifling thing to one who has spent himself and his substance, if only the reward comes to him. The results were gratifying. (1) They returned. That which was possible (that they might be sacrificed to the cause) had not come to pass. They had lived through it all and were back at the feet of the great Teacher again. (2) They returned with joy. Those who go out afield for God never return in any other way. There is joy unspeakable in having

toiled for his sake. One Sunday afternoon, a company of young people, starting out with their Bibles, met a picnic-wagon filled with young men and women bound for one of the summer resorts near the city. They jeered and joked when they saw the Bibles and hymn-books. They wondered that any one could be so foolish when they might be having a good time. Yet the revelers returned several hours later drunken, disheveled and quarrelsome, while the young people who had sought joy in service, returned with joyful hearts and sparkling faces. (3) They had met with success in dealing with evil. "Lord, even the demons are subject to thy name," they said. We feel that this ought not to have surprised them. Perhaps not. Certainly it ought not to surprise us. He is still the certain victor in the conflict with sin, though the results may tarry. The demons of earth and hell are subject to him.

XXIX.

THE MAN BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.

Luke 10: 25-37.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Jesus making use of the seemingly accidental opportunities.

1. The parable does not deal with the improbable or the unusual. Two classes who need kindly ministry: (1) The man who takes unnecessary risks; (2) the man who is overcome through no fault of his own.

2. Consciousness of need of another a call to action.

3. Evading the call. (1) How the priest met the call: he got as far as possible from where he would see the wounded man. (2) The Levite's way. (a) Investigation not enough; (b) moralizing on the effects of sin and folly not our first duty.

4. The Samaritan's way. (1) He looked on the wounded man; (2) he pitied him; (3) he had hope for his recovery; (4) he did things for the wounded traveler; (5) he was prepared for such cases.

5. A type of our Lord's work for the world.

Many of the important things in our Lord's life and teachings seem to turn upon accidental happenings. While we can not consider any of these things as mere "happenings," we are impressed with the manner in which he made use of what would have been commonly regarded as incidental. For instance, it is to the question of a man who was trying to squirm out of a close corner that we owe this great parable.

1. *A parable that deals with a not uncommon nor an improbable situation.* Both present and past testimony bear us out in the conclusion that the waylaying of a traveler on the Jericho road was a by no means uncommon occurrence. Like all of the teachings of Jesus, this parable appealed to men by its close touch to common experience. (Nothing is said of the traveler's responsibility for his own misfortune. However, we may safely place him in one of the two classes: (1) Those who have taken needless risks; (2) those who are helpless in the hands of misfortune from no fault of their own.)

2. *Consciousness of human need brings responsibility.* The condition of a man lying bound and helpless in a solitary place, is a mute appeal for help. To those who discover his condition, it becomes, straightway, a personal call. The imperative call to the

Christian to minister to the suffering ones at hand, or in the lands afar, is not to be found in some word written upon the heavens in letters of fire, but in the needs of these men themselves. It is this word made flesh that speaks in a manner that can not be misunderstood.

3. *Evading the call.* Men have various ways of evading the call of the man by the side of the road. (1) The priest's way. He knew the traveler was there, but he got out of the way as quickly as possible. He may have been one of those tender-hearted (?) people who shut their eyes and close their ears in the effort to make themselves believe that there isn't any such thing as need. (2) The Levite's way. He doesn't seem to have been so sensitive. He came right up to where the wounded man was. The King James Version tells us that "he came and looked on him," which amounts to the same thing. We would think rather better of him if he had not made any investigation. The most heartless thing that passes under the name of virtue is "social investigation" that stops at uncovering the distress of the unfortunate.

4. *The man who saw more than the others.* The Samaritan saw a wounded man, but he saw something more. He saw an opportunity to be a brother to one of his kind. (1) He looked on the wounded man. He was neither too busy nor too heartless to take time to investigate. (2)

He had compassion. That beautiful word "compassion"! He did not hurry away for fear he would have to share the passion of the suffering traveler. He suffered with him. (3) He had hope for his recovery. Hope for the restoration of the sinner is necessary to anything like successful effort in his behalf. (4) He did things for the wounded traveler. He gave from his own stores for the man's comfort, and did not neglect to make some provision for the future. It costs something to be sympathetic. (5) The Samaritan was provided with the things that were sure to be needed in an emergency like this. Some one says, putting it into common speech, that the man seemed to have been looking for trouble. Well, he was prepared for it, at least. A good many people have a sympathetic feeling for men who have been overtaken by the robber of souls, but they realize that they have not prepared themselves to meet this need.

5. *The universal Neighbor.* In this allegory some one has drawn this picture of Christ as the friend of the man by the side of the road: A man had fallen into a deep pit from which he had no power to extricate himself. As he lay bemoaning his fate, Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, came and looked upon him. He uttered some wise words about the folly of falling into pits, and gave the unfortunate man some gems of truth, but the man was no better

off for these. The philosopher could not lift him from his place of misery. Another, grave and gentle of mien, was attracted by his cries and came and looked into the pit. "Poor man," he said, "my heart bleeds for you," and he wept, but he, too, went and left the suffering man where he found him. That was Buddha. By and by came another. He saw the suffering man and spoke words of hope to him. He reached down with his strong arm and lifted the poor man from the pit. He healed his wounds and set his feet on a rock: that was Christ Jesus.

XXX.

THE GOOD AND THE BEST.

Luke 10: 38-42.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Shifting valuations.

1. A hospitable home.

2. Contrasting the good with the best. Why Martha was not commended. Not that she did wrong things, but that she allowed minor things to take a major place. (1) What complete absorption in material things did for Martha: (a) It robbed her of her peace of mind; (b) it made her censorious toward her sister; (c) it robbed her of the companionship of her Lord. (2) Mary's choice was best. (a) It paid the highest tribute to the great Teacher; (b) it gave her that which could not be taken from her.

Very few things in this world have a fixed value. The trivial becomes important and the important trivial, by the mere shifting of circumstances. Eating and drinking are indisputably important, yet there are times when we would not put these things first. For instance, if there is a question of

choosing between saving his own life and finishing his breakfast, the sane man will unhesitatingly choose the former.

1. *A hospitable home.* Not much is said about the home at Bethany, but, with those rare touches that we find nowhere else but in the Bible, we are given an idea of what its open door and welcoming hearts must have meant to the tired Master. The possibilities of ministry that lie within the pure, love-lighted home can never be overestimated.

2. *Contrasting the good with the best.* There is an old saying that the good is the enemy of the best. Here we find it exemplified. (1) Martha's ministry was, so far as what she did is concerned, good. We are not to take the sisters as standing, the one for the worldly and the other for the spiritual. We can not imagine Martha's being kept from companionship with Christ by any frivolous thing. Martha's choice was not commended by the Lord, because: (a) It robbed her of her peace of mind. We suspect that one of the reasons why Martha was sorely cumbered was that she added a good deal to the duties that, under ordinary circumstances, would have seemed sufficient. The fretful spirit that follows the unnecessary effort to get ready for company is not unknown to us. (b) It made her censorious toward her sister. Those who have no time to sit at the feet of the Master, because they are careful and troubled about things that

are of less worth, usually look reproachfully upon those whose vision is clear enough to enable them to see the relative values of things spiritual and things temporal. There is the woman who looks sourly at her neighbor who will sometimes leave out an extra bit of brushing and polishing that she may attend a missionary meeting. She would tell the Master on this sister, if he were here to-day. (c) It robbed her of the companionship of her Lord. In a church where the women's society abounded in dinners and luncheons and fetes, one of the members called a halt, saying, "Sisters, we have been so busy that we have not had time to say our prayers." People who insist on doing things that are ordinarily duties, at a certain time, no matter what must be missed in order to do so, are certain to miss some of the richer things of life. I once heard of a woman who missed every one of a series of wonderful meetings because she said it was a good time to cut carpet-rags. (2) Mary's choice was commended because: (a) She paid the Lord the highest honor by listening to what he had to say. She showed something of the importance she attached to his teaching. (b) She received that which she could not lose. When the Master had passed on out of the world, still the pure gold of his gracious words was with the one who counted its value above every other thing.

XXXI.

THE SHEPHERD, THE SHEEP AND
THE FOLD.

John 10: 1-16.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Ecclesiastical politics.

1. Jesus rebuked the pseudo-shepherds because: (1) They were usurpers of the places they held; (2) they were actuated by unworthy motives: (*a*) They wanted the prestige of position; (*b*) they made the office a means of personal material gain.

2. Jesus proclaims himself to be the good Shepherd because: (1) He entered his work as the Father had willed (the door of humanity); (2) he served, not for hire, but for love; (3) he protects the flock; (4) he feeds the sheep; (5) he sustains a personal relation to each one of the sheep.

3. The sheepfold. Jesus the door: (1) To a new life; (2) to an abundant life.

Ecclesiastical politics that deals out glittering prizes of place and money is not a new thing. The words of Christ to the false prophets of his time apply well to many who are on the earth now. The steps

between the selfish ambition to get "prominent places" in the work of the church and the haughty assumption of power on the part of those to whom Christ spoke, are not many.

1. *Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of his time for several reasons:* (1) They were usurpers of the places they held. They had stolen the places that belonged to men who were capable of loving their brethren and of living for them. (2) They were shepherds from false motives: (a) They wanted the prestige of office. They loved to be deferred to and to be called "Rabbi." (b) They made office a means of personal enrichment. They ground down the common people that their own wealth might be increased. No wonder they were called "hirelings." The loss of spiritual power is sure to follow the perversion of a spiritual calling into a money-making enterprise. It is told that once, when one of the popes was showing a visitor the treasures of the Vatican, he said, "You see, the church can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none'." "No, father," retorted the other, "neither can she say to the lame, 'Arise and walk'."

2. *Jesus proclaims himself to be the good Shepherd because:* (1) He entered into his work in the way the Father ordained. In the fullness of time he came as it had been written. The door through which he entered into his place was that of humanity. He took upon himself the gar-

ments of the flesh. (2) He was not a hireling. He was the Father's chosen. He loved us and *gave himself* for us. (3) He protects the sheep. (4) He knows and supplies their needs. (5) He sustains a tender, personal relation to every member of his flock. "He calleth his own sheep by name!" What a comforting assurance! To him I am not merely one of the "crowd." He knows my name. He thinks of me.

3. *The sheepfold.* Again Jesus changes the figure in describing his relations to believers. He is the door to the place of peace and safety. The world still needs this lesson. How many there are who imagine that through their own good qualities, their gifts and attainments they may enter! They would climb up some other way and slight Christ, the true door. Jesus has proven to be, to countless thousands, the door (1) to a new life; (2) to an abundant life in whose green pastures there is peace.

XXXII.

WHEN THE GUESTS FAILED TO
COME.

Luke 14: 15-24.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The popular conception of the kingdom of God.

1. The universal appeal. (1) Something all may enjoy; (2) furnishes what all men need.

2. God's consideration for men. (1) The feast had been long in preparation; (2) the first invitation took in many—all the house of Israel; (3) added reminders were sent to the invited guests; (4) a final announcement.

3. An ungracious reception. (1) Manufactured excuses: (*a*) A man whose possessions took all his time; (*b*) one who was more interested in his property than in the feast; (*c*) a flippant response, earthly relationships fill his world. (2) Asking to be excused where excuse is impossible.

4. God's purposes not thwarted. Your opportunity and mine.

The exclamation of one of those who sat

at the table with him in the house of a Pharisee led up to the parable of the guests who failed to come to the banquet. The average Jew, of the time of our Lord, had a materialistic conception of the kingdom of God. There was to be, as the culmination of all things, a great feast of all things that could tempt the appetite. At this feast, the favored ones were to sit forever in the blissful employment of eating and drinking. In the teaching of Christ, this feast meant the era of gospel grace which was to begin with the completion of the work he had come into the world to do.

1. *The supper is a type of the universal appeal in God's invitation.* The first announcement in the parable is that of a feast—something that appeals to men of all classes. Sports and music and literature and art will each, in their turn, interest certain men, but the feast knows no class in its appeal both to man's love of pleasure and to his bodily needs. Thus (1) the kingdom of God offers that which will give unmixed joy to every one who accepts it; (2) it offers that which alone can save man from his sins.

2. *The parable sets forth God's consideration for men.* (1) The feast had been long in preparation. In the day when man first sinned, and therefore first needed a Saviour, came the promise of him who was to come. (2) The invitation took in many. All of the house of Israel had been

invited. (3) The invitation bore the mark of sincerity in that the servant was sent to remind those who had been bidden. (4) In the messengers who declared that the time had come to enter the festal hall, Jesus saw himself and his messengers who now, in the fullness of time, had come to remind the already bidden Jews that all was complete.

3. *An ungracious reception.* (1) Some have found fault with the parable on the ground that the excuses the men offered for not coming to the feast were such as no one would think of offering under similar circumstances. It is here that we find one of the strong points of the parable. Men offer excuses for neglecting spiritual blessings that they would not have the face to offer anywhere else. Those who are mentioned here did not give *reasons* why they could not come to the supper; they began to *make* excuses.

(a) The first man was absorbed in his own property. He was lord of an estate. What did he care for a supper while he could gloat over his new possessions? Still, he felt constrained to lay the blame for his rejection somewhere, and there is an effort at politeness in his plea that he be excused. (b) The second man simply manifested a greater interest in his newly acquired oxen than he did in the feast. He did not, however, say he must go. He simply announced his decision. Not on the ground of necessity, but because he has made other plans, he also asks to be excused. (c) The third refusal

has about it a note of flippancy. Was he treating the invitation as a joke? It sounds like it. In spite of all the comments that have been made about the worthlessness of this excuse, we must acknowledge that we have something too much like it to-day. One of the heart-breaking things is the record of those who were once leaders in the Lord's work, to whom marriage has meant a deadening of interest, and a final withdrawal from spiritual interest. This does not apply to those who are kept at home by the care of little children, but to strong young men and women who have simply become sufficient unto themselves. (2) "*Have me excused.*" The response of some of those who were invited is typical. They asked the messenger to have them excused, when it was the master of the feast who alone could excuse them. So, many people now seem to imagine that if they can satisfy the preacher concerning their remissness, they are safe. Making your excuse to priest or preacher or council amounts to nothing, if it is not the sort that will bear the scrutiny of the eye of God.

4. *The Lord's purposes not thwarted.* It was not the master of the feast that was the loser. The guests who were first invited were not the only ones. Those whom they despised came in and took the places the ungrateful ones had slighted. The very people to whom Christ spoke saw the beginning of the fulfillment of this. We turn the

pages of the Book and see righteous Cornelius sitting down at the feast of grace. A little farther and we see Paul as he shakes the dust from his feet and says, "I turn to the Gentiles," and still the festal hall is open, and we their children are entering in.

XXXIII.

A LIFE PROGRAM THAT WAS NOT
CARRIED OUT.

Luke 12:13-21.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: An interruption well used.

1. The peril of covetousness. May be manifested in men, even when they ask no more than belongs to them.

2. Life in the negative and in the positive. (1) What life is not. (2) Life is what we are.

3. The mistakes of a successful man. (1) He missed the best investments; (2) he forgot that he had had a partner in his success; (3) his program took account of none but himself; (4) he planned to live without work; (5) he put himself on a level with the animal (eating, drinking, sleeping); (6) he counted on what was not his, many years.

4. "Man proposes, but God disposes."
The peremptory call.

5. The unanswerable question.

We are disposed to be severe with the man who had such scant sense of the fitness

of things as to interrupt the great Teacher in his great work of imparting spiritual truths, and ask him to turn his attention to so sordid a matter as a family quarrel about money.

Instead of allowing the interruption to turn him aside from his great purpose, Jesus made use of it. His question, "Who made me a judge and a divider over you?" did not mean that he had no right to judge, if he had chosen to do so, but was his way of calling the man's attention to the fact that he was losing sight of the truth that the mission of Jesus was a higher one than that of the magistrate.

1. *The peril of covetousness.* There is nothing here to lead us to conclude that the man who came to Jesus wanted more than was coming to him, yet his request suggests to Jesus the subject of covetousness. One may be covetous without reaching after that which is not rightfully his. There is such a thing as one's so bending all of the forces of his being in the pursuit of what is legally his own that mammon will take the place of God in his soul. This man was so absorbed in getting what was coming to him that he cared nothing for the spiritual treasures that were being freely poured out by the great Teacher that day.

2. *Life in the negative and in the positive.* (1) What life is not: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." Here we have a con-

tradition of the world's idea of life. Some one puts it thus: "We are not here to make a living, but to make a life." Every human being seeks satisfaction. That is life. Many have lived to learn that getting will, of itself, bring one no nearer to satisfaction.

(2) Life is what we are. Possession may or may not have anything to do with making it worth while. Some who have renounced the mad pursuit of money that they might better serve the world have found that life consisted in the things they had not.

3. *The mistakes of a successful man.*

(1) He missed storing some of his goods where they would have brought eternal profits. The first mistake the rich man made was his decision that he had no place to put the superabundance that had flowed into his hands. Were there no poor who needed his ministry? There was the frail widow who was trying her best to keep her children together. Couldn't he have found room to bestow some of his goods in her empty larder? There was a man who had started about the time the rich man started in business. This man had been handicapped by sickness, and—yes, he had made some mistakes. It wouldn't take much to put the man on his feet again. A generous loan, perhaps, and there was room for goods in his empty storerooms. (2) He forgot that he had not been without a partner in his success. The ground brought forth plentifully, but how much did the rich

man have to do with it? For how much of it was he dependent upon God? (3) He made himself the center of everything. In the brief speech here recorded he uses the first personal pronoun thirteen times. (4) He decided upon a life that was to be devoid of labor of any sort. "I will say to my soul . . . take thine ease." There is no worse defrauder than the man who lives in the world without work, not because he is unable to work, but because he deliberately plans to seek satisfaction in idleness. (5) He put himself on the level of the animal—eating, drinking, lying upon soft couches. What use has God or the world for such a life? While eating and resting must be a part of every life, no one can give himself wholly to pampering the body without besmirching his soul. (6) He counted upon time that was not his. "For many years"—that was his confident assumption, soon to be broken in upon.

4. "*Man proposes, but God disposes.*" That very night something broke in upon the rest of the rich man. In other days—while he was getting rich—business had been wont to peremptorily bid him leave his couch and his easy chair. He had gone grumbling again and again, but had not dared to disobey his taskmaster. Now all of that was over: he was going to take his ease *for many years*. The messenger that came that night merely laid a cold hand upon his brow, and a voice that seemed to freeze his blood

bade him arise and leave his soft couch. The shriveled soul of the rich man must pass under the scrutiny of the God who gave him being.

5. *The unanswerable question.* The question is one that many a man would give a good deal of his fortune to have answered. Will his son look well after the business he has built up, or will it be in the hands of a receiver before five years have rolled away? Will his daughter take prudent care of her fortune, or will it go to pay the debts of a dissolute husband? "The things thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" Whose? Why, he had not thought of the possibility of any one but himself having the riches he had gathered. We remember his arrogant "I" and "my" and "mine." No, the rich man could not answer that question any more than can the man to-day who spends his life piling up dollars.

Who seeks for earthly riches,
Seeks for a goodly thing,
For gold, when well expended,
Can light and gladness bring
To those whose bonds of error
The truth alone can burst.
He wisely seeks for riches
Who seeks God first.

XXXIV.

THE DIVINE VALUATION OF
SOULS.

Luke 15 : 1-32.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The significance of a man's drawing power.

1. The parables that set forth: (1) Man's lost state; (2) God seeks him; (3) estrangement, repentance and restoration of the sinner.

2. The lost sheep. (1) Conscious of its state, but unable to find the way back; (2) the shepherd leaves the upper fold; (3) he seeks till he finds; (4) he carries the sheep in his arms.

3. The coin. (1) No consciousness of being lost; (2) the owner sought it because: (a) It belonged to her; (b) it was useless as long as it remained hidden; (3) the search meant a clean sweep of the house.

4. The lost son. (1) He rebelled against his father's authority; (2) put distance between himself and his home; (3) he neither spent nor invested his money; he wasted it; (4) a swift end to his "good time"; (5) a disgraceful alliance and its

results; (6) disturbing memories; (7) resolution; (8) return.

5. The waiting father.

"Then drew near to him all the publicans and sinners to hear him." This is a wonderful commentary on the character and personality of Jesus. The Pharisees proclaimed their hatred of sin in no uncertain terms, but love and concern for the sinner they knew not. At the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, many of the rulers had treated him with patronizing consideration, but as jealousy was aroused they drew away from him, and those whom the rulers despised and oppressed were inspired with confidence. It was before an audience in which the publicans and sinners were prominent that Jesus gave the most wonderful pictures of the love of God that were ever held up before mortal eyes.

1. *The parables.* Broadly treated, these parables, all upon one general theme, set forth: (1) The reality and the seriousness of the condition of the lost. (2) The seeking love of God even toward those who have had little to do with their own deplorable state, as the sheep and the coin. (3) The workings of sin in the heart, and the rise, growth and fruits of repentance. These are given in the story of the prodigal.

2. *The lost sheep.* (1) Here is the picture of those who are conscious that they

are lost, but do not know how to get back to the fold. Through their own waywardness and foolishness they find themselves estranged from God. The sheep was to blame for leaving the green pastures and the neighborhood of the sheltering fold, but there was no deliberate rebellion against the shepherd. Perhaps it did not know when it crossed the line that separated the safe pastures from the wilderness, but there came a time when it became conscious that, instead of peaceful meadows, there were rocks and briars. (2) The shepherd leaves the fold and goes seeking the lost, just as our Lord left the upper fold to seek wayward men. (3) He seeks till he finds. The shepherd's seeking was not over till he had penetrated the thicket where the lost sheep was hidden. Christ's seeking for the lost will not end short of the place where his love reveals itself to the straying one. That is his part. That the sheep should refuse to go with the shepherd is unthinkable, and here, alas! there may be a difference between the sheep and the straying soul it represents. The picture of the love that does not give up seeking till the end of the quest is reached ought to mean something to us. (4) He carries the sheep in his arms. The shepherd did not drive the sheep back to the fold. He carried it. He supplied the strength that the sheep lacked. When the straying one refuses to try to leave the wilderness because he is afraid he can not hold out, he

is forgetting something. Doesn't the strength of the great Shepherd count for anything? Evidently the sheep in the parable was not strong enough to hold out, but that did not mean that the shepherd was willing to leave it to die in the wilderness.

3. *The lost money.* While this picture has much in common with the first, they are by no means identical. (1) The coin was really lost, but it did not know it. So are the unknowing, unthinking heathen. So are many even in our own land. They have no realization of their condition. Yet, let us remember that one is not necessarily safe when he does not realize danger. (2) The owner sought the coin (*a*) because it belonged to her. The instinct of ownership was enough to inspire the search. (*b*) Because the coin was useless as long as it remained hidden. Man in his lost state can not be used as his Maker intended he should be used. (3) The woman swept the house—not to make it clean, yet that was an incidental result. No doubt the search for the coin was the means of ridding the house of a good deal of useless rubbish. So it is with the church; when it enters into a dead-in-earnest search for the lost, it is certain to get a wholesome cleaning. Petty quarrels and jealousies and disturbing notions disappear when the church lights her candle with the purpose of finding the lost.

4. *The lost son.* Here we have the picture of man's using his own volition to his

undoing. First, there was a chafing against home restraints. The apostacy of the heart always precedes that of the life. (1) He wanted to control his own affairs. He demanded freedom as a right. (2) He wanted to get out of sight of home. The far country is the only place where the prodigal sees the prospect of a good time. (3) Possession is of worth only as we use it. This young man did not invest his money; he wasted it. (4) The end came swiftly. When he looked for those who had helped him spend, they were gone—doubtless to prey upon some other fool. (5) Hunger drove him to make an alliance that a little while ago he would have despised. He joined himself to a citizen of that country. He didn't foresee what this service would mean. The man *sent him to feed swine!* Men who join themselves to the devil are usually sent on errands that are at first appalling. (6) There came disturbing memories of other days. He could run away from home. But he couldn't keep thoughts of home from coming back to him. (7) These thoughts bore fruit. We are told that to repent is to renounce the love and practice of sin. That is just what the prodigal did. (8) He virtually said, "I will not," and "I will"—"I will not stay here and feed the swine. I will go back to my father."

5. *The divine valuation.* In each of these three pictures the end is practically the same. The owner rejoices with exceeding

great joy over the finding of that which was lost. The fact that each of the three losers went out to seek for the lost is significant. The father saw his son a great way off and went to meet him. Here we can taste no higher joy than that of bringing the lost to their own estate. In heaven there is joy untold. There is joy in heaven when the wandering soul is brought back. Some one has said that on earth we are more conservative. If this is true, it is because we do not fully take in the fact that the lost are really lost. Did Christ's words about the rejoicing over the repentant one being greater than that over those who needed no repentance hold a rebuke for the self-righteous Pharisee? Undoubtedly they did. They failed to repent because they were satisfied with themselves.

SEVEN SUBJECTS FROM THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SON.

1. *Why God allows men to sin.* "He divided unto him his living."

2. *How and why men get away from God.* "He . . . took his journey into a far country."

3. *Wasted substance, or what Satan gives in trade.* "He wasted his substance with riotous living."

4. *Unexpected entanglements and consequences of sin.* "He joined himself to a

citizen of that country, and he sent him . . . to feed swine."

5. *The insanity of sin.* "When he came to himself."

6. *The place and power of human decision.* "I will arise and go to my father."

7. *Home, sweet home, or the way back to the father's house.* "And he arose and came to his father."

XXXV.

LOVING AND HATING TO THE
GLORY OF GOD.

Luke 14: 25-35.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The setting: Words that were likely to rid the ranks of mere camp-followers.

1. The lover who knows how to hate. A serious difficulty. (1) The Bible forbids hatred between man and man. (2) It enjoins love: (*a*) To God; (*b*) to men. (3) It bids us hate sin.

2. When "hating" means putting a low estimate on the thing in question. (1) The world; (2) his own life, his possessions; (3) his friends.

3. Loving and cross-bearing.

4. Taking stock of our love for Christ. (1) The unfinished building; (2) the losing fight.

5. Love means renunciation of personal claims.

6. The "Christian" who has lost his saving properties.

The strong words that are recorded in

this lesson were such as to rid the ranks of camp-followers and of those whose attachment to Him was but superficial. We have no reason for believing that the man who is always ready to crowd to the front and enroll himself under the leader of every new cult is peculiar to our own time.

1. *The lover who knows how to hate.* "Taken alone," we sometimes say, "this is the hardest saying of all of those that Christ left us." Right here we make our first mistake. We have no right to take an utterance or act of any one and consider it apart from everything else we know of him. Here is our difficulty: Jesus warned those who were pressing about him that men who were not ready to hate those who were bound to them by the nearest ties could not be his disciples. Elsewhere in the New Testament we have this word "hate" used where its meaning is clearly animosity and venom. Did discipleship mean such a thing as this? Before we satisfy ourselves on this point, let us lay down these propositions: The safest conclusion is arrived at when we judge the unusual by the usual. The mysterious can never be unraveled if we ignore that which is clear. (1) The Bible forbids venomous feelings between man and man. (2) It enjoins love (*a*) to God; (*b*) to man. (3) It bids us hate sin. Jesus constantly taught that anything but love between man and man was displeasing to him—the disciple must be a lover (Matt. 5:

43-45; Luke 6:35). The men who were under his direct teaching, and who were afterwards Spirit-guided in their utterances, sounded the same note (John 2:9; 4:20, 21). In Eph. 5:29 it is declared to be unthinkable that any man should hate his own flesh.

2. "*Hate*" may sometimes mean the comparative setting at naught of something. Since no one can come up to the Christ standard and harbor malevolence, we must try the other meaning in connection with his declarations that a man must hate: (1) The world; though God loved the world and gave his Son to die for it; (2) his own life; though with his life, alone, can the Christian carry out God's commandments; (3) his friends and kindred; though he has been told to be kindly affectioned to others. We can not doubt Christ's purpose to startle those who thought that discipleship was a thing to be entered into lightly. Further on we see that he is teaching by putting together, in contrast, the things that men are likely to value most and the riches of the kingdom of God. His use of the word "*hate*" here to describe the setting at naught of everything for the sake of the kingdom, is, after all, not more revolutionary than our own use of the word "*despise*." We declare that a man despises something he might have had, and takes something else in its place, when we have no idea of accusing him of hatred. He has simply set

a higher value on the thing he chose than on that which he left.

3. *The love that sets at naught everything that would rival the kingdom and its interests is willing to endure.* Jesus used the cross as a sign of suffering hardship for the sake of the kingdom of God. Just what his disciples thought of his use of this figure, we have no means of knowing, but there could be no such thing as their missing the truth he wanted to convey to them. We may note here that Jesus did not speak of cross-bearing as a merely passive thing. The Christian must carry his burden, but not for the mere sake of carrying it. He must carry it along the way of service. "*And come after me*" is not to be forgotten. In another place (Luke 9:23) we are told that bearing the cross is to be a part of daily life.

4. *Taking stock of our love for Christ.* It is easy to say, "I love him. I will follow him," but Jesus wanted men to know that discipleship was not cheap. (1) The unfinished building. He draws the picture of the man who contemplates the erection of a building. If he is a wise man, he will take account of his resources before he makes a start. If he does otherwise, he may have to abandon the work before he has accomplished anything. This will mean a personal loss to him, and that he will become a laughing-stock to those who think he ought to have had more sense than to attempt that

for which his resources were manifestly inadequate. (2) The losing fight. The king with ten thousand men considers the question as to whether he shall go to war against the enemy who commands a force twice as large as his own. We have the same lesson upon the necessity of honest self-examination as a preliminary to becoming a Christian. Let us not read into Christ's words a statement concerning the comparative strength of the forces that are on the side of the Christian and those that are on the side of the evil one. The man who is linked to the Almighty is stronger than all who can be against him, but one can not be linked to him so long as he refuses to let go of the world.

5. *Love for Christ means a renunciation of personal claims.* Renunciation has a large part to play in conversion. The best definition of repentance (in the writer's opinion) is "a renunciation of the love and practice of sin." The words of Jesus take us further than this. Whatever a man has, of bad or good, he relinquishes his claims upon it. If we may be allowed to use the language of the market, he makes an assignment of all that he is and has to the Guardian and Saviour of his soul, content to know that he to whom he has committed everything will let him have what is best. We may well ask ourselves seriously how nearly we measure up to this rule. The Christian professes to have signed over his claims, but most of

the time he forgets that he has done so. There is the story of a ruler who in the Middle Ages sought to win the title of sainthood by renouncing a valuable piece of property. The deed was made out to the "Blessed Virgin and the Most Holy Saint Peter." The historian adds dryly, "He continued, however, to pocket the rents."

6. *The Christian who no longer saves.* The salt that has lost its distinctive properties is not valued by any one. In these days of utilization of waste products many things that are useless to those in some line of manufacture are of great use to those who make something else. We are told that the savorless salt is good for nothing. Here is a picture of the Christian who loses all of the marks that ought to distinguish him from the world. The church can not use him, and those who make no profession do not want him in their company.

XXXVI.

WHAT THE GODLY MAN MAY
LEARN FROM THE ROGUE.

Luke 16: 1-13.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Finding instruction in unlikely places.

1. The fact of stewardship. (1) Of universal application; (2) it means not merely conservation of treasure entrusted, but increase also; (3) the limitations of freedom.

2. The certainty of the day of accounting. (1) Its coming usually a surprise; (2) to be dreaded or welcomed, depending upon the state of our affairs; (3) the charge.

3. Rainy-day wisdom. (1) The man was prompt; (2) challenged the employer's admiration, not by his rascality, but by his forethought.

4. Turning temporal into spiritual values.

It is the mark of a narrow mind to discredit instruction that does not come along conventional lines, yet often those who have been the bearers of great messages have departed from the beaten paths in the per-

formance of their work. Thus it was that Jesus often dealt in what, to the superficial, seemed to be paradoxes and contradictions. He used the unrighteous to teach forceful lessons concerning righteousness. What Jesus does in the present parable is to draw a contrast between the one who makes provision for a few years at most, and the one who professes to provide for eternity. That the world is often more resourceful and enterprising concerning the conservation of material things than is the Christian in the handling of spiritual values is to the shame of the latter.

1. *The fact of stewardship.* Jesus makes plain the fact that life is a trust. (1) This is of universal application. The fact that one is rich or poor neither makes nor does away with the fact of accountability to God. Those of us who have little would sometimes roll the burden off upon those who have much, but there is a divine ratio of responsibility which takes in every man. One who has neither riches, nor talent, nor influence, still has life, which is itself a trust. (2) Responsibility does not end with that which we receive. The steward was to be held responsible, not merely for the goods that had been committed to him, but also for all that could be made of the original capital. (3) Limitations of freedom. In a sense the steward had been left free to conduct the business of his lord as he would. This was necessary to the best

interests of both. Life would be robbed of color and compensation if God had made us like so many automaton, incapable of moving save in one direction. The wise business man will encourage originality on the part of those who serve him: otherwise they will have little interest in what they do. Yet even where the largest liberty is allowed there are certain restrictions.

2. *The certainty of the day of accounting.* As long as he was left to himself, the plans of the dishonest steward worked well enough. The thing he lost sight of for a time was that the day of accounting was certain to come. (1) The summons seems to have taken him by surprise. So it has ever been. There is the idea in the mind of the evil-doer that God is to be mocked and that, in his case at least, whatsoever a man soweth, he may escape from reaping. (2) The day of accounting will be welcomed or feared, depending upon the use we have made of our Lord's goods. (3) This man was charged with wasting his employer's goods. A good many people are sensitive on the point of having a clear distinction made between dishonesty and mere wastefulness. While there may be a distinction so far as motive is concerned, a man is just as truly robbed of his possessions by the employe who wastes money and goods as by the one who fills his own pockets with things that belong to the man he works for.

3. *Rainy-day wisdom.* (1) The man

acted promptly. He seems to have had warning long enough beforehand to enable him to do something. He might have said, "Oh, well, I haven't been 'put on the carpet' yet. The boss *says* I have to give an account, but I'm not going to worry over it till it comes." We know he did nothing of the kind. He coolly and quickly provided for the days to come. In other words, he made himself secure. (2) He challenged the admiration of his employer. He was commended—not for his rascality, but for his enterprise. No doubt the employer wished that his servants who were morally correct had some of this man's shrewdness. It is a fine thing to be able to discern a great quality in another, even when it is being put to a base use.

4. *Turning material things into spiritual.* The dishonest steward made the things of the present serve his future comfort. Is it possible for us to make out of temporal materials spiritual habitations? Truly it is. Instead of allowing them to harden your heart, and to create a wall between you and God, build for yourself, out of them, eternal mansions which will receive you when earthly shelters and defenses have passed away.

XXXVII.

BEYOND THE GREAT GULF.

Luke 16: 14-31.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Immediate reason for the presentation of this parable.

1. A fortunate man. (1) He was rich, and this meant (*a*) ease, (*b*) feasting, (*c*) personal adornment.

2. The other man. (1) An unfailing complement to the super-rich man; (2) a poor man; (3) a sick man.

3. An impartial conqueror. (1) The parallel; (2) the contrast.

4. Revelations concerning the other side. (1) This life not the end; (2) conscious existence in the world to come; (3) conditions determined during the present life; (4) decisions are final.

5. Reversed conditions. (1) The rich man no longer a sovereign; (2) the gulf that was fixed by the lives of the men when they were in this present world.

The parable of the unjust steward, with its warnings against failure to prepare for the life to come, was received with scoffing

by those who needed it most. Jesus completed the parable by setting forth in a picture the relation which the present life bears to the life beyond. Perhaps the lessons of this parable are quite as much needed to-day as they were when Jesus gave it to the people.

1. *The fortunate man.* The first words concerning this man were such as to attract the attention of these who, we are told, loved money. He had the things they coveted. (1) The man was rich. We are not told how much he owned, for the terms "rich" and "poor" have always been relative ones. Of one thing, however, we may be certain—he could eat and drink and wear only so much. The rich man has no greater capacity than the poor man. All that is above this is not wealth, for the man can not use it. The life of a man whose winnings have been all material does not, at best, furnish very interesting reading. He ate and drank and slept and that was all.

2. *The other man.* (1) We would know that there was a man at the other extreme, even if we had not been told of him. When some men live in riotous luxury, there must be some who live in poverty and hunger. (2) We are at first told nothing about the real worth of either man. The things we first learn about Lazarus do not tell us what manner of man he was. We know only that he was a pauper, and (3) that he was sick unto death. The former fact was

due, no doubt, to the latter. While there are men who are charges upon society because of their own indolence and vice, there are those who from physical weakness have fallen behind in the race of life.

3. *The impartial conqueror.* There were few parallel passages in the history of these two men, but at last we find one. The same statement is made of both. (1) The rich man died; the beggar died. Here the parallel ends. (2) Now do we know that the beggar was something more than a beggar. He was a prince of the heavenly kingdom—not because of what he had, nor because of what he had not, but because of what he was. The angels of God make no mistakes. He left his rags and sickness and his hard bed for the joys of the heavenly land.

4. *Revelations concerning the other side.* (1) Death does not end all. Job's question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" is answered here in an unmistakable affirmative. (2) We are taught that there is conscious existence beyond the grave. These who appear in the parable thought and felt. (3) While conditions were reversed, these have preserved their identity. Whatever else we shall be in the other world, we shall be ourselves. (4) The separation of the wheat and the tares is to be final and decisive. While the dispositions and judgments of God have not all been revealed to us, it is plain that there is no court of appeal beyond

the grave where the decisions which we ourselves have created can be reversed.

5. *Reversed conditions.* (1) The rich man no longer a sovereign. Lazarus can not be detailed to serve him. (2) He is reminded of the gulf between himself and Lazarus. There had been a great gulf between them down below that it would have been by no means impossible for the rich man to cross, but then—well, it suited him best to leave it as it was. When there is a great gulf between the sensual, prosperous man and his suffering brother here, we have reason for believing that there will be a gulf between him and the Son of man in the world to come.

There on the streets are shops behind whose gilded
portals

Honor has died and truth and manhood failed.
These would not open up their doors to-morrow,
If over all the will of God prevailed.

There where, with showy, wasteful splendor,
The feast for sated Dives has been spread,
No double portions would be served to-morrow,
But Lazarus at the gate would, too, be fed.

XXXVIII.

BROUGHT BACK FROM THE
SHADOWS.

John 11: 1-46.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: An awe-inspiring scene.

1. Why Lazarus was brought from death to life. (1) Not because he could not be spared from the world's work; (2) not for the sake of his loved ones; (3) not because death is a calamity; (4) the miracle was wrought for the glorification of God's name.

2. The delay. (1) Not a sign that he did not care; (2) his purpose broader than their conceptions: (*a*) The faith of the people was confirmed; (*b*) we ourselves are richer in faith.

3. In the house of mourning. (1) He did not make light of sorrow; (2) he wept with the heavy-hearted; (3) he gave consoling promises; (4) Lazarus lived to die again. To us is the promise that, though we die, we shall live again.

There is no passage in the life of our Lord which we approach with such a sense

of awe as this one which shows him as he enters into the mysterious abode of the dead, and out of its black depths brings forth light and victory.

1. *Why was he brought back?* When we remember that death is the rule of the world—not a calamity, but a necessity—we are at first disposed to ask why Jesus brought Lazarus back from the tomb. (1) It can not have been the mere desire that Lazarus should continue to live and pursue his work in the world. We know that it has ever been so that the most useful and the most worthy must leave the world at the end of their allotted time. (2) It was not for the sake of his loved ones, since none can permanently escape the pains of bereavement like this. While Jesus had regard for the sorrows of the sisters, the relief of this sorrow was not his major reason for working the miracle. The dead brought back, he knew, would live but to die again. (3) It was not because death is an accident to be deplored. It is a part of God's plan. Truly for a wise reason it is "appointed unto man once to die." In his life man has his opportunity. He passes away and his place is given to another. Think what the world would be if no man had died of all who have been born into the world. (4) Jesus himself gives us the reason—that his Father's name might be glorified, that men might know that he whom the Father sent could not be conquered of death.

2. *A trying delay.* (1) We are inclined to share the wonder of the disciples that Jesus delayed his going to Bethany. The anguished hearts at Bethany are troubled. Why does he not answer at once the appeal? Sometimes in our fervid petitions we forget that the gratification of our wishes might affect the welfare of others. (2) We see only ourselves and our interests, while the Father of us all has in mind the highest good of every soul. That which seems like delay is loving concern and not indifference. (a) The faith of many was confirmed. (b) We are richer because of his words at the tomb.

3. *In the house of mourning.* (1) Jesus did not make light of sorrow. While he knew that it was soon to be turned into joy, the evidence of suffering hearts moved him to tears. He knows that our own light afflictions are but for the moment, but he has compassion for us. The tears of Jesus were for human suffering. (2) He brought the consolation of God's promise. Black indeed is that bereavement where those who suffer have no hope upon which they may lay hold. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, and blessed also are those who know that their departed ones have died in him.

Blessed are they who, when the clods of the valley fall upon the casket of their dead, have hope in Him who said, "I am the resurrection and the life."

XXXIX.

THE TENTH MAN.

Luke 17: 11-19.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Settings of the story.

1. Affliction that brought men to a common level. (1) They were "unclean"; (2) they were isolated; (3) their condition was hopeless.

2. Deep need sometimes creates faith. People who have no faith in Christ because they have never felt the need of him.

3. Cure in co-operation with Christ. (1) An easy condition; (2) a difficult one; (3) their faith honored.

4. The tenth man. (1) They all obeyed and were made whole; (2) why the Samaritan returned; (3) what our Lord's question tells us.

Along the borders of Samaria and Galilee, Jesus and his disciples were brought within range of a pitiful group of men who evidently knew who was passing that way. These desperate men were bent on making the most of the possibilities of the occasion.

1. *Affliction had brought these men to*

a common level. These men were not of the same people. Some may have been of the most aristocratic and exclusive of the Jews. One, we know, was a Samaritan, but the dreadful thing which had come upon them had brought them together. (1) They were alike "unclean." While sin does not always bring those who indulge in it to a common level in the sight of man, it does in the sight of God. The leper was "unclean," whether he were Jew or Samaritan. So the sinner, untouched by the healing and forgiving power of Christ, is "unclean" in the sight of God, no matter what his temporal state may be. (2) They were isolated from their former associates. Sin isolates the sinner from all of the good and pure of earth. While he may keep his place among men, there is still a gulf between him and God's children that will one day become manifest. (3) There was no human cure for them.

2. *Deep need sometimes creates faith.* The fact that it is nothing uncommon for the scoffer to turn to God when he is facing death inclines us to the opinion that they were ready to believe in a Saviour when they realized their need of one. Blind self-sufficiency is keeping many a one out of the kingdom of God.

3. *Cure in co-operation.* What these lepers were required to do was both easy and difficult. (1) Easy because there was no intricate formula, no difficult condition—just to follow the law of Moses for the

cleansed leper. (2) It was difficult because they were bidden to go on an errand of gratitude for a cure that had not yet taken place. If they had not perfect confidence in him who sent them, it must have looked very much like a fool's errand. He did not work an immediate cure, but he laid a command upon the petitioners themselves, whereby they were to become workers together with him. Obedience to his command meant faith, if ever obedience meant that. (3) It was not before or afterward, but in the act of obedience, that they received what they asked for.

4. *The tenth man.* (1) Nine of the men who had been healed went on, no doubt, to punctiliously fulfill the law. That was needful, but there was something lacking. (2) One man didn't want to run the risk of losing the great Teacher. He wanted to thank him, and he wanted to tell others what Jesus of Nazareth had done for him. (3) "Where are the nine?" Jesus would not have asked the question had the conduct of the nine met his entire approval. Our Lord loves the heart that overflows with gratitude and the lips that are eager to bear testimony to his power and his goodness. How poorly do our testimonies often measure up to what we have received!

"Jesus on trial to-day we can see.

Thousands deridingly ask, 'Who is he?'

Now they're rejecting him—your Lord and mine:
Bring in the witnesses. Where are the nine?"

XL.

OUR ROCK AND THEIRS.

Luke 18: 1-16; Deut. 32: 31.

OUTLINE.

1. Why we should pray. (1) That we may sustain a relationship of conscious dependence toward God; (2) prayer is a manifestation of our faith in God.

2. A prayer lesson enforced by contrasts. (1) Between our situation and that of the woman: (a) She had no ground for hope; (b) she was a widow; (2) our Advocate and hers: he was selfish and cared not for her; (3) a contrast between our forbearance and God's; (4) man's delays and God's.

3. The final outcome.

1. There is nothing plainer in the written revelation of the will of God than that it is his desire that man shall exercise the privilege of prayer. The reasons for this are manifold. (1) There is no relation so intimate as that which hinges upon the dependence of one person upon another. It is a manifestation of the wisdom of the Creator that, with the child, a feeling of

dependence precedes its knowledge of most things. (2) All true prayer is a tribute to God. We would not ask God to help us, if we did not believe that he was powerful. We would not ask him for blessings, if we did not believe that he was rich. We would not ask for forgiveness, if we had not first been convinced that he was loving and merciful.

2. *A parable of contrasts.* In the parable here presented to us, Jesus teaches a truth by means of contrasts. The scene before us presents certain contrasts with the real truths to be grasped. (1) *Contrast our own situation with that of the widow*, and behold the difference of advantage in our favor. The only likeness is that both have needs. (a) She had practically nothing upon which to base a hope that the judge would hear her plea. What, on our part, as relates to God, would be faith, on hers was merely daring. The Christian has, as a foundation for his hope of an answer, the boundless and rich assurances of the word of God. She no doubt came trembling and frightened to him of whom she would ask favor; we have been told to come boldly to the throne of grace. (b) She sustained no special relations to this man. Indeed, in the eyes of the Oriental a widow was a person to be looked upon with contempt. She had no man to stand for her and plead her cause. The defenseless woman was defenseless indeed. Contrasting ourselves with the widow,

we see our immense advantage. We are bound to God by the most tender relations. We wear his name. We can look up to him and address him as "Our Father who art in heaven." (2) *The contrast between our Advocate and hers.* The judge is presented as being wholly selfish. He plainly declares that he regards not man. Our God so loved man that he gave the most precious thing that he had. (3) *God's longsuffering and man's.* In our hot displeasure we sometimes ask why God does not cut off those that hinder and trouble us. Does he not care that we are harassed and hindered by the works of evil-doers? We do not consider the other side. He is giving them a chance to redeem themselves. His delays in the execution of judgment are not due to the fact that he does not care for us, but rather to the fact that he does care for them. (4) *God's delays and the delays of the unjust judge.* The delay of the unrighteous man was due to the fact that he did not intend to act at all if he could help it. The delay on his part was needless. God's delays are never that. He delays only long enough to bring the best things to perfection. A child stood watching a potter as he shaped a beautiful vase. "When it is finished, I will give it to you," the potter said. After waiting for some time, the child went away half disappointed. The vase seemed to her to be already perfect. Day after day she waited, saying again and again, "He has forgotten."

But he had not. One day when the vase, richly colored and glistening from repeated firings, came to her, she was brought to understand that he had delayed only that he might give her something rich and beautiful.

3. *The conclusion.* From the contrasting pictures let us learn our lesson. If the heartless, wicked man, who has no reason but a selfish one, answers determined prayer, how much more may we be sure that He whose interests are our own will not fail to hear us when we call unto him.

XLI.

THE SEARCHING TEST.

Luke 18: 18-30.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Our mistaken estimates.

1. In the young man's favor. (1) He was young; (2) he held an honorable place; (3) he was reverent; (4) he had a clean record; (5) he was aspiring.

2. Jesus tested him as to. (1) His faith in Christ's claims; (2) his conceptions of duty; (3) the comparative value he set upon temporal and spiritual riches.

3. Coming near to the kingdom did not mean entering it.

There is nothing in which we oftener err than in our rating of men and women as possible subjects for evangelization. We know that out of the very mire there have been plucked the rarest jewels, by those who were counted fools for ever making the effort. Much of the work of our Lord among men was upon what we would pronounce very unpromising material. Men who pretended to be the leaders of thought laughed at him, while many of those who

followed in his train seemed to have material, rather than spiritual, conceptions of his nature and his purpose.

1. *A favorable subject.* It is probable that if you and I could have looked upon the young man of whom our lesson tells us, we would have set him down as a shining exception to the masses; and truly there was much to be said in his favor. (1) He was young. He was not a child, but the rare possibilities of youth were with him; for with all of its callowness and imperfection, how rich is youth! There is the fresh, vigorous body, ready to respond to the call of enthusiastic impulse. (2) He held an honorable place. Some one may ask whether position may make a man more valuable in the kingdom of God. Truly it may. In itself, one soul is as precious as another, but the winning of a man who already holds a position of power is the greater victory, because of the possibilities for service which he possesses. (3) He was reverent. He did not come with the jaunty, flippant air which too often characterizes the young. His kneeling before the Master gives testimony to the reverence which he felt toward the one to whom he came. There is the least possible hope for winning those who lack the spirit of reverence for sacred things. A frivolous, grinning, giggling audience is a far more hopeless one for the preacher than is one where men are serious in their opposition to him. (4) He had a clean record.

This young man had back of him no shameful past. There was no tyranny of evil habit to bind him and hold him back. Many a man has been kept from coming to God because he has felt that his past was too horrible to be gotten away from. (5) He had spiritual aspirations. His question, "What lack I yet?" was not a bid for praise. It expressed the honest yearnings of his soul. He did not expect Jesus to say, "You do not lack anything." He knew that he did. It was this feeling which brought him to Jesus. His was that noble discontent with self which points to improvement.

2. *Jesus met the young man's request and tested him.* (1) He tested the young man's faith in His own divinity. His question, "Why callest thou me good?" had in it a deep probe. Why, indeed? If, in the face of all that Jesus claimed for himself, he were to be addressed as "Good Teacher," it meant an acceptance of his claims. Men who to-day reject the divinity of Jesus and patronizingly call him good, contradict and involve themselves. (2) The young man was tested as to his conceptions of duty. The average Pharisee had no conception of duty beyond formal compliance with the law. (3) He was tested as to the value he set upon spiritual, as opposed to temporal, things. He was face to face with the real question of surrender that sooner or later meets every one who would enter the kingdom of God. The question was not, "Do

you want eternal life?" but, "Do you want eternal life above all else?" We are not to suppose, as some have surmised, that Jesus wanted the young man's money for some good cause, but that he wanted to free the young man from the weight which he unconsciously carried about with him. The surgeon who removes a man's hand does so, not because he wants the hand, but because he desires to save the man.

3. *Almost will not avail.* With all of the conditions that were in his favor, the young man's case must be dismissed as having ended in nothing. Jesus knew that the one thing was enough to keep the young man out of the kingdom. One fault may seem to be small in comparison with such a bright array of virtues, but it ceases to be small when it amounts to giving something besides God the supreme place.

XLII.

HIGH PLACES AND LOW MOTIVES.

Mark 10: 35-48.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: False conception of spiritual truth.

1. A mistaken request. (1) It put self first; (2) it ignored the idea of service; (3) it meant advancement at the expense of others; (4) it did not consider the idea of fitness.

2. Those who deplore place-seeking are often guilty themselves.

3. The way to the high places means: (1) Large investments; (2) choosing the hard places; (3) serving instead of ruling.

A little while before this, Jesus had spoken of those who should sit upon twelve thrones. Immediately there arose in the minds of some of his followers visions of pomp and position that were to be theirs. They made the common mistake of failing to perceive that, while the blessings of religion extend to every part of a man's life, his spiritual and not his temporal advancement is the chief thing.

1. *A mistaken request.* We can not blame the mother of James and John, nor, indeed, can we blame the two men themselves, for being ambitious. The request for something to which they childishly asked Christ to pledge himself even before they made it known was a mistaken one because : (1) It was wholly selfish. (2) It ignored the idea of serving the interests of the kingdom of God. (3) It meant their own advancement at the expense of others. (4) It left the matter of fitness out of the question.

2. *Those who deplore place-seeking are often guilty themselves.* The disciples who were incensed over the behavior of James and John had been disputing about high places themselves. Our inconsistency is shown in our railing at others for grabbing at what we failed to grasp at because we were less enterprising than they. Some one tells this story which illustrates our common inconsistency in this direction. Two Hebrews sat down to a table upon which was a plate holding two pieces of pie—a very large one and a very small one. The one who was urged to help himself first did so, taking the larger piece. “Oh, Isaac,” said the other, reproachfully, “you took the biggest piece.” “If you had taken first, which one would you have taken?” questioned Isaac. “The small one, of course.” “Well, you got it, ain’t you? I guess you ought to be satisfied.”

3. *The way to the real high places.*

There are high places in the kingdom of God, but whoso desires them must count on a great cost. The man who has spiritual ambitions should understand that high places are not to be gotten by the mere asking. (1) They mean large investments. He that puts poor service and a half-heart into his work need not expect a great reward. (2) They mean the fields that the world counts hard and unpromising. The best places according to earth's accounting are the easy ones. Not so when God's valuations are accepted. (3) They mean serving—not ruling. Jesus said, "I am among you as one that serves." No one really serves until he is able to sink self out of sight and, with his eye on the Master, seek the good of others.

XLIII.

LABOR TROUBLE THAT WAS
FAIRLY ADJUSTED.

Matt. 20: 1-16.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The merit system.

1. We do not always measure rewards by merits. We make exceptions in the case of (1) the incapable; (2) the undeserving.

2. We do not expect God to deal with us solely according to our merits.

3. The vineyard of God. (1) A place for work; (2) those that enter are under orders; (3) laborers are needed.

4. The calling of the laborers. (1) The early and the late calls may stand for (a) the children of Abraham and afterward the Gentiles; (b) the twelve and afterward Paul; (c) our modern Christian nations and now the lands where the light is just beginning to break; we were called in childhood; the old man in darkest Africa has just heard.

5. The late response; they came as soon as they knew.

6. God keeps his promise to all who an-

swer. Salvation and heaven to all who accept him.

7. The late-comer misses: (1) Satisfactory retrospect; (2) the joy of service.

8. The present call.

In modern politics, and especially in municipal politics, we hear a good deal about the merit system in the placing of men. An exceedingly wholesome doctrine it is that merit, above everything else, would put a man into office and keep him there. This so appeals to the public mind that even those who do not like its workings are careful how they speak against it. If we imagine, however, that the doctrine is something new, we have only to turn to the twenty-seventh verse of the chapter preceding the one from which our lesson is taken, to see that Peter and some of his companions declared themselves in favor of it, but they decided also that they were the meritorious.

1. *We are not always disposed to measure reward by actual merit.* The rule is set aside, or overruled, in certain situations. (1) In our dealings with those who from one cause or another have fallen behind in the race of life, we do not stop at giving merely the benefits earned. We establish homes for the friendless, many of whom, we know, are friendless because they have used their opportunities unworthily. We main-

tain rescue stations, and charity hospitals for men, not because they have done things that earned our ministry, but because they need it. (2) Our richest benefactions are bestowed, not because those who receive are deserving, but because we are generous and merciful. It is true that those who take advantage of what we offer usually have to comply with certain rules, but these are conditions of being blest and not grounds on which blessings are bestowed.

2. Settlement of accounts between man and his Maker can not be made on the same basis that settlements between man and man are made in the business world. No man can say to God, "I have done so much, therefore you owe me so much." To keep books with God in this way would leave the best of men hopelessly involved.

3. *The vineyard of God.* The vineyard, frequently used in the Scriptures to typify the kingdom of God, is, for many reasons, an excellent figure. (1) It is a place for work. If the kingdom of God were what some people seem to think it is, the figure of a pleasure-garden would have been more fitting. While Jesus Christ promises rest to those who come to him, it is not rest from labor, but rest in it. "All ye that labor," he says. (2) Those who enter the vineyard are under orders. No one ever yet succeeded in carrying on an enterprise that involved the employment of men, if there was not an understanding that those who were

at work were subject to certain authority, that had been clearly defined. When those who profess to have entered into the service of the Master insist on taking their own way, they cease to be servants. (3) Laborers are needed. There is little encouragement for a man to enter a field of effort where the supply of laborers exceeds the demand. This has never been the case in the heavenly vineyard. Nothing should appeal to the manly man so much as the fact that God needs him.

4. *The calling of the laborers.* (1) We have no intimation that they belonged to any one class. Some were called in the early morning. We may apply this in several ways. (a) Early in the day of the world God called the Jews. Afterward he called the Gentiles. He is calling yet: he calls you and me. (b) In the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called Peter and James and John. Later on, he called Paul to special ministry. (c) You were called in childhood by the gracious teachings of the home and church. The man over in dark Africa had reached old age before he knew that the Lord of the vineyard wanted him. We can not apply here the petty rule of "So many hours' service, so much pay." Spiritual service can not be measured with a yardstick, nor with a pint cup.

5. *The late response.* Not many of those who are outside of the kingdom of God can find much ground for satisfaction

in the example of the laborers who responded late in the day. The question, "Why stand ye here idle?" tells us that idleness is an offense against God. The Lord accepted their answer. They had not known before that the Lord wanted them. They could never make that excuse a second time. Certainly none of us can urge this as a reason for our own neglect. Instead of being laggards, these were models, in a way, since they went as soon as they were called. Like the example of the dying thief who was accepted of our Lord, this parable has been placed on the wrong side of the line.

6. *God rewards according to his promises.* Every one who accepts this offer is promised forgiveness of sin and an eternal home after this life. In this sense, the "chief disciple" and the weakest Christian are paid the same. Those who received the first call, and had therefore served the longest, received at the end of the day just what had been promised to them. So far, all was well, but they must needs bother themselves about that which was between their master and the eleventh-hour laborers. Their contention was not that they should receive more, but that the others should receive less. How do we reconcile the course of the master with justice? In this way: They were settled with for having faithfully done all that was asked of them. Nothing is said about either the first or the last group of laborers having *earned* what they received.

God does not count worthiness according to our standards. The one who comes late into his service misses many things. (In the nature of the case, it could not be otherwise, but one is no more truly saved than is the other. This is because salvation is conditional, but not to be earned.)

7. *The late-comer misses many things in this world.* The Oriental householder feeds and protects those who work for him. (1) The man who volunteers at the eleventh hour misses a life in God's care, a backward view free from remorse; (2) the joy which always accompanies service.

8. *The present call.* Where shall we place ourselves as concerns the lessons contained in this parable? He is still walking up and down in the world calling to men who sit idle in the midst of a bending harvest: "Go work to-day in my vineyard." We can not say that we have not heard his voice. One of the serious features of the case is that you and I do not know that our call may be the eleventh-hour—the last—call. The harvest truly is plenteous, and the laborers are few.

XLIV.

THE CONVERSION OF A GRAFTER.

Luke 19: 1-10.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The impartial judgment of Christ.

1. An unlikely subject for evangelization. (1) His business was against him; (2) he was hardened by ostracism; (3) he was physically insignificant.

2. The favorable side. (1) He had wholesome curiosity; (2) he was enterprising.

3. The other view. (1) Jesus saw the possibilities of Zaccheus; (2) he spoke to him with cordial kindness.

4. A new Zaccheus. (1) He confessed his sins; (2) he renounced his sins; (3) he outlined a new course of living for himself.

When the church awakes to the fact that its mission is that of saving men, it is staggered by the stupendousness of the task on its hands. "Whom shall we save?" it asks, and the answer comes back, "The lost, for it is this class alone that Jesus came to

reach." We are not likely to disagree upon this point. Our difficulty comes further on when we attempt to decide who the lost are. The evangelization of nearly every class of sinners has its supporters. Even the drunkard, the thief and the profligate are given special attention by evangelistic specialists. There is one class, however, about which we hear but little, yet Jesus declared that those, of all others, found the way into the kingdom difficult. The evangelization of the godless rich does not attract many volunteers. You and I would find it easier to delve into the slums for souls than to conduct a house-to-house campaign in the aristocratic quarters. Jesus neglected neither the high nor the lowly in the social scale. He was able to see the beggar crouching low by the wayside; he was able to see Zaccheus in the top of the sycamore-tree.

1. *An unlikely subject for evangelization.* Perhaps if you and I had searched through Jericho that day when Jesus passed through its streets, we could not have found a less promising subject for evangelization than Zaccheus the publican. (1) His business was against him. How often we have taken it for granted that it was not worth while to try to reach some man, simply because he had made his living by wrong-doing. When Francis Murphy was a saloon-keeper, no one thought of him as a likely subject for evangelistic effort, but when Francis Murphy saw Christ, his business became a despised

thing to him. (2) Zaccheus had hardened himself. How do we know this? It was not in the nature of things that a man could endure the coldness of scorn that fell to the lot of the publican, and remain tender in heart and conscience. (3) He was not much of a man to look upon. There were so many people who wanted to see Jesus. It did not seem possible that this little man, who couldn't see over the head of any one, would attract the attention of the great Teacher.

2. *The favorable side.* There were some things, however, to be said in favor of the publican. (1) He had wholesome curiosity. There is always hope for the one who wants to see and know. While curiosity, exercised in the wrong direction, is an unlovely trait, most of us are baffled and disgusted if we have to do with the indifferent creature whose interest can not be awakened on any subject. (2) He was enterprising. His wealth probably indicates that. His course on this one occasion is an unmistakable indication that Zaccheus wasn't the man to be turned back by ordinary obstacles. He wanted to see the great Teacher, about whom every one was talking, but he couldn't get into the front row, and he couldn't see over the other people's heads. That would have settled some people, but it didn't settle Zaccheus. He knew he was not very tall, but he knew of a sycamore-tree that was considerably taller than he was. He put one and one together.

3. *The other side of the story.* Let us turn and look at the story from the standpoint of Jesus. (1) Jesus saw Zaccheus. I don't suppose it once occurred to the publican that the Master would see him. Jesus saw more than his bodily presence. He saw the possibilities that were in the wealthy grafter. (2) Jesus spoke to Zaccheus with cordial kindness. If he had sternly commanded Zaccheus to come down out of the tree, and had stopped at that, there would be a different story to tell. Jesus does not leave the sinner whom he calls, bruised and crestfallen. Though he bids him leave the place where he is, he also offers to come in and sup with him.

4. *A new Zaccheus.* So far as we know, Jesus did not call the attention of Zaccheus to his sins. The presence of the sinless Christ was alone enough to make him hate his sins. The genuineness of the publican's turning was evinced by several things. (1) He confessed that he was a sinner. There was no evasion, nor beating about the bush. (2) He renounced the love and practice of sin. That is repentance. (3) He resolved upon a new course of living. That day the Master came to the house of Zaccheus, but, better still, Zaccheus came to the Master.

XLV.

SEEING WITHOUT EYES.

Mark 10: 46-52.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Why some names are remembered.

1. Bartimeus as he was. (1) Blind; (2) penniless; (3) a mendicant.

2. What the blind man saw. (1) His opportunity: (a) He knew that he was blind; (b) that he was in the presence of one who could give him sight.

3. How what Bartimeus saw affected his course. (1) He made the best use of his powers; (2) he was not discouraged by criticism; (3) he confessed his faith in Jesus as the Son of David.

4. The compassion of Jesus. (1) He heard the appeal; (2) he spoke encouragingly to the man.

5. The victory of faith.

Have you ever considered how few of the world's dwellers impress themselves sufficiently upon it to insure their being remembered beyond the passing of the generation in which they live? Turn the pages of

universal biography and you will find, here and there in each generation, a few names that have stood the test of time. Here, perhaps, it is a king, there a statesman, a prophet, a peasant, or, as the present lesson testifies, a beggar. But whatever of note one has attained, we may be safe in saying that men's names are on the scroll of the remembered chiefly because the owners placed them there. Our attention is still fixed upon the ancient "City of Palms." The reaching of the rich man of Jericho marks the entrance of Jesus into the city, and the transformation of the beggar marks his exit.

1. *Bartimeus as he was.* (1) Bartimeus was blind, and that means that he was helpless. (2) He was without money, or other means that might have purchased that which would have insured care. (3) He was a beggar. To be poor does not necessarily mean that one is a mendicant. Few indeed are those who do not look with abhorrence upon such a state as this. There is something about beggary which makes the manhood within a man crawl and cringe and die.

2. *What the blind man saw.* Though he was lacking in physical sight, he saw what others had missed. (1) He saw his opportunity. He knew (a) that he was blind; (b) he saw Jesus, the possible healer.

3. *The manifestation of earnestness.* It was no half-hearted effort which the blind beggar made toward his own cure. (1) He made the best possible use of the powers he

had. He could not see, but he could speak. He did not mildly request, he cried out. (2) He was not to be discouraged by the critics. When some rebuked him for his unconventional behavior, he cried out the more.

4. *The compassion of Christ.* (1) In the midst of all the tumult of many voices and tramping feet, *Jesus heard.* The ear of love has ever been acute. At an evening party, in the midst of the music the hostess arose and left the room. Some one asked the reason. The answer was that she heard her little child crying in an upper room. "I heard nothing," said the guest. It was because the ear of the mother, the ear of love, was open to hear the little cry that she, of all the rest, was conscious of it. Jesus hears your faint cry for help, because he loves you. (2) Jesus took time to listen, and graciously sent for the afflicted man. We may find a lesson in the kindly helpfulness of those who reassured the blind man. While we can not banish the malady of sin, it is ours to lay a reassuring hand upon the anxious one, and say, "Be of good cheer: he calleth thee."

5. *The victory of faith.* The man who had faith enough to seek help from the great Teacher, as did Bartimeus, did just what might have been expected of him. There was quick response: even the casting away his garment as he ran tells us something of the belief of the blind man that

his prayer had been answered. He was refreshingly direct. There was one thing Bartimeus wanted, and he said so without stopping to qualify the request. The receiving of his sight meant a new life for the man who had been blind. For straightway, we are told, he followed Jesus in the way.

XLVI.

WEIGHED AND FOUND WORTHY.

John 13: 1-11.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The setting: Bethany.

1. Gratitude and affection manifested by: (1) The courage of Mary; (2) her unselfishness; (3) not the payment of a debt, but an offering of love.

2. Seeing the wrong side. Judas found fault instead of beauty. (1) He was lacking in love; (2) he was covetous.

3. The cloak of Judas: (1) Insincerity; (2) a convenient mask.

4. Jesus saw: (1) The love of Mary; (2) the treachery of Judas.

5. Making use of fleeting opportunity.

6. The imperishable memorial.

Again we find ourselves in the little town of Bethany. The Master and his disciples have arrived, and tarry here over the Sabbath. The scene to which we are introduced is a festive one. Not more than two months ago Jesus was called hither to minister to the bereaved ones in the home that seems to have been a loved retreat with him.

Lazarus, now strong and in the glow of health, sits with other guests at the table. He divides attention with the great Teacher to whom the feast is given.

1. Gratitude and affection made manifest. Once before when Jesus sat at a festal board, a woman came to show her repentant love for him. This time, instead of "the woman who was a sinner," we see Mary, the devout, spiritually minded girl of whom Jesus once said that she had chosen the better part. The vase of rich ointment is unsealed and poured upon the head of the Master, as though the giver would say that only the anointing such as was bestowed upon kings and priests was fitting. (1) It must have taken no small amount of courage for Mary to thus honor the Master in the presence of the banqueters. (2) Mary showed her love by the costliness of her gift. "But," you say, "are we not told that it is not money value that really counts? A small offering with love, you know—" That is true enough from one standpoint, but the costliness of Mary's offering must have meant sacrifice upon her part. The price—of more than forty dollars, we are told—might have been used in gratifying many wants of even a woman in affluent circumstances. (3) Mary did not have an idea of paying off her debt to the Lord, but she did want to put into something tangible her gratitude to him for having given her brother back to her.

2. *Seeing the wrong side.* Judas refused to see the beauty of what Mary had done. He found fault because (1) he was wanting in love for his Master. There are a good many people who can not see a generous gift bestowed upon the cause of Christ to-day without saying ungracious things about the gift and the giver. (2) He was covetous. He wanted to appropriate the money for himself. John calls Judas a thief. There are various grades of men of the Judas sort, who from covetousness object to every gracious gift of love to Christ or the church. After all, covetousness is the major reason for the small number of those who pour their best at the feet of the Master.

3. *The cloak of Judas.* (1) He tried to hide his wickedness under a mantle of sincerity. The money Mary spent for the ointment would never have reached the poor if it had once fallen into the hands of Judas. Judas was not the last man to try to make out of his greed something that would bring him praise rather than censure. The man who objects to the sending of money to foreign shores that Christ's name may be honored there can often talk meltingly of the heathen at home, but he is not usually distinguished for his generous gifts in this direction. Most of us are ready to venture that Mary's ministry to the poor compared more than favorably with that of Judas. (2) The mask of the objector is a convenient one for

many a person who has really nothing better to offer.

4. *What Jesus saw.* Judas evidently made an impression upon his brethren, for they began to agree with him that Mary's offering was to be spoken against rather than commended. Jesus was not to be misled by the comment of the faultfinder. (1) He saw the wealth of devotion that was behind the act of Mary. The costly perfume would have meant nothing to him if the offering had been made for show, or for some other unworthy reason. (2) Jesus saw the deceitfulness of Judas. Does it seem strange that one who had seen so many evidences of his Lord's power should have thought to deceive him? It might seem strange were it not that often we act as though we did not know about the all-seeing eye of God. Mr. Moody used to say, when he tried to arouse men upon the futility of trying to hide evil from the Almighty, "*Character is what a man is in the dark!*"

5. *Making use of fleeting opportunity.* "The poor ye have always with you." Did this mean that he cared not? The time was not far distant when they could minister to him only through those about whom Judas professed to be concerned. Now, only Mary of them that knew him seemed to realize the preciousness of the opportunity of paying him a tribute of love. His words about his betrayal and death at Jerusalem had not fallen unheeded upon her. It is

little wonder that she brought her best now. If we knew that darkness and separation were to close down between us and those we love best before the lapse of another week, how quickly would we bring out our boxes of sweet-smelling ointment. Afterward—that is often the best we can do—when it is all over, we join with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea in bringing tributes to the dead. Rich as were their offerings, they seem poor indeed beside that of her who brought sweet ointment for the living Christ.

“It is better to bring a small bouquet,
To give to your friend this very day,
Than to bring a garland of roses red
To lay on the casket when he is dead.”

6. *The imperishable memorial.* Jesus looked down the ages and showed how in every age the world would tell the story of what Mary had done as a memorial to her.

XLVII.

A PARADE THAT STIRRED THE
TOWN.

Mark 11: 1-11.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: A spectacular appeal.

1. For once Jesus made a bid for public notice: (1) Not to gratify personal vanity; (2) for the sake of the disciples; (3) for the sake of the multitudes in Jerusalem.

2. Humble accompaniments: (1) Arranged by humble people: the disciples, who have nothing of their own to give; (2) the owners of the colt; (*a*) nameless; (*b*) willing to loan to the Lord; (3) the crowd of common people without costly offerings.

3. When the city was stirred.

Men sometimes resort to what we call the spectacular, because it is easier to get people to look at that which is unusual and startling than to appeal to them by logic and exhortation. There were times when our Lord's teaching was spectacular, though he shrank from personal display. Only once did he permit anything like it. For this reason, if for no other, the scene presented

in our Scripture lesson is full of interest.

1. *Jesus made this bid for public notice for a purpose.* (1) It was not to gratify personal vanity. Long before this, he had resisted the effort of the people to take him by force and make him their king. He had promptly rejected the proposal of Satan to give him the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory thereof. The small and humble pageant in which he was the central figure was far from splendid to him who could have summoned to his aid legions of angels. (2) He had in mind his disciples. These who would share in this brief triumph had already shared with him humiliation and jeers and buffetings. For a little while they were to march in the front ranks, and proclaim to the adoring crowd that *they* were his closest friends. There were dark days before them when they would need the memory of this scene to keep their hearts in hope. (3) For the sake of the multitudes. Devout Jews from every quarter thronged the city, many of them, no doubt, from villages into which he had never gone. The effect of this sight must have been far-reaching.

2. *Humble accompaniments.* It was in keeping with the mission and character of Him whose kingdom was not of this world that this procession was not attended with costly display. (1) No rulers or potentates waited upon him. It was his own band of common men who took charge of the ar-

rangements. (2) He rode upon a borrowed mount. Neither he nor his disciples (with possibly a few exceptions) had anything of their own. (3) Nothing is said about the status of the owners of the colt. They remain nameless. We can not doubt that Jesus, who foresaw what took place between the owners of the colt and the disciples, had also a purpose concerning them. The question of the owners of the colt was a natural one. But that the answer of the disciples, "The Lord hath need of him," should have settled the matter by no means follows. "They must have known Jesus," you say? Probably they did; but the fact that the Lord has need of our possessions doesn't always cause us to relinquish them. It would have been more like your way and mine if the owners of the colt had said: "We would like to let the Master have the colt, but we need him for our own use." The priority of the Lord's claim upon us and our substance is not always clear to us. (3) The offerings of the multitude were not of the costly sort that we are wont to associate with kings: (a) Branches from the wayside trees; (b) garments bearing the marks of toil and travel.

3. *When the city was stirred.* We may believe that those who saw that wonderful procession which came into the Holy City that day, never forgot it. The picture becomes very vivid even as we think of it. We easily single out the young man humbly

clad, riding in the midst of an adoring throng. We see the branches of palm and hear the chanting of many voices. No wonder all the city was moved, and said, "Who is this?" They had been given one more opportunity of knowing Him who had come, and who was about to go away again. Perhaps some of those who had come from remote places to keep the Passover, recalled years afterward this scene as they listened to one of the company who went everywhere preaching the Word. We are certain that the appeal served its purpose for these. Again, there were those who had sneered at him and set him at naught. Perhaps some had not yet understood the claims of Christ. He was rendering it impossible for even those who sought his life to say: "We never knew that he claimed to be the King of Israel." The multitude following after caused many to ask questions about him. The spectacle of a multitude following Christ to-day is certain to lead many who have been careless, to ask, "Who is he?"

The gospel invitation of a human example has not lost its power.

XLVIII.

TAXPAYERS AND TAX-DODGERS.

Mark 12: 13-18.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Tuesday of "the last week." Combining forces.

1. A conspiracy to entrap Jesus: (1) In his works; (2) in his talk.

2. Cunning plotters. (1) The test of flattery; (2) between two fires.

3. The tables turned. (1) The meaning of Cæsar's image; (2) spiritual taxes.

4. Whose image? (1) Offering to God must not bear Cæsar's stamp. (2) Material gifts not a substitute for obedience. (3) Man's image and superscription.

Tuesday of "the last week" was a day of mighty conflicts with the enemies of Jesus. Again and again they attacked him with cunningly devised questions, only to find themselves brought to confusion. In sheer self-defense, the Pharisees and Sadducees, who had no liking for each other, had joined forces against him.

1. *A conspiracy.* The enemies of Jesus had tried in various ways to overthrow him.

(1) They had tried to discredit his works and had failed. That has always been true of evil-doers who attack the works of the pure and good. There is a testimony of a good life which can not be suppressed. A man was sent for by a society of atheists to come into a certain community and demolish, by his lectures, a small band of Christians. He went, but, after looking carefully over the ground, refused to make the attempt. "Surely you are not *afraid* of these feeble folks," some jeered. "That is just it," was the reply. "I find that these Christians live blameless lives, and are blessing the community in every way by their good deeds. I should only make a spectacle of myself if I should attempt to discredit them in the eyes of people who have seen them live." (2) They attempted now to entrap him in his talk. Here is the weak tendency with the average man. Often one who can be depended upon to avoid doing foolish things, will betray even his own interests in his speech.

2. *An example of cunning.* If the enemies of Jesus had been dealing with one of their own kind, their plot would have been perfect. (1) They used the bait of flattery. Such words as they spoke have caused many a man to "lose his head." They knew that he was a teacher who wasn't to be influenced by what anybody said or thought of him. No, indeed! Whatever he said would settle the question they pro-

posed, too. This was the gist of their unctuous introduction. (2) They put him, as they thought, between two fires. He must either proclaim himself to be a traitor to the powers that had fixed the tax, or must be classed among the enemies of the people who believed that the yoke of Rome was unjust. Taxation was, to the Jew, a badge of servitude. To have acknowledged the right of Cæsar to rule over them, would have meant the relinquishment of the hope of Israel.

3. *The tables turned.* Jesus turned the tables in such a manner as to put his questioners to confusion. He took neither of the alternatives to which they thought he was limited. He made them answer their own questions. (1) The tribute money bore a stamp that told to whom it belonged. They already had the law of Moses concerning property rights. Putting the two facts together, the answer was plain. (2) They pretended to be anxious concerning the duty in this matter. Jesus put a far more important duty before them. They knew that the law put obligation to God first. If they wanted to know what belonged to Cæsar, he would remind them that there was a spiritual service that belonged to God.

4. *Whose image?* We may find a lesson, the application of which probes even deeper than the one that was forced upon the discomfited questioners. (1) We can not render to God the things that bear

Cæsar's stamp. The godless Pharisees who cast large gifts into the treasury, and made great boast of their benefactions, expected God to reward them, when, in reality, all they did bore the stamp of worldliness and pride. (2) The one who offers God no tribute of obedience and adoration can not pay off his debt with material offerings. Baubles and coins that are of this world's perishable metal can not put man into right relations with God. (3) Man bears the image and superscription of humanity, but he also bears the superscription of his Maker. Paul says, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." The Christian looks toward the day when he shall perfectly reflect the image of Him whose he is and whom he serves.

XLIX.

THE TEARS OF JESUS.

Luke 19: 41-44.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Thwarting him who has all power in heaven and on earth.

1. Jesus mourned over the blindness of the people. (1) Blindness prevented them from recognizing him; (2) it led them to attribute his mighty works to the powers of evil; (3) it hardened their hearts.

2. Jesus mourned over the ingratitude of the people.

3. He wept over the impending ruin of the city.

4. The vision of human need; weeping over people.

5. His love not abated.

As we have gone from scene to scene in the wonderful life of our Lord, we have, like the multitudes that thronged about him, marveled at his power. Though at the end we hear him say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," we know that there were times when even the divine Son of God recognized that there were limita-

tions that hemmed him in. It has ever been possible for man to thwart the plans and purposes of the God that made him. We remember that it was said of Jesus that, in some places, he could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief. The tears of Jesus, as he looked upon Zion, the city of the great King, were due to the fact that he could not meet the piteous need of the people. The hindrance lay, however, not in his lack of resources, but in their refusal of what he came to offer. "I would," he says, "but ye would not."

1. *Jesus mourned over the blindness of his people.* All through his ministry the willful blindness of his own people was manifest. (1) It was blindness that prevented them from recognizing in him Israel's hope. (2) It was blindness that caused them to attribute to base causes his mightiest works. (3) It was blindness that led them to cry, "Away with him!" when his life was in their hands. Thus, on the cross he said of them, "They know not what they do." How different would have been the story of the next few days, if they had allowed themselves to look upon him with unclouded eyes. Is one to be blamed for being blind to the value of the best things? Very often he is. No one can harbor envy and jealousy in his heart and see honestly those for whom he cherishes such feelings. We are so prone to be blind to the good that is in those we dislike.

2. *Jesus wept over the ingratitude of his people.* To be slighted and illy treated by those to whom we have done no wrong is trying; but what shall we say of the experience when ill treatment comes from one on whom we have poured out our love? The human heart sounds the depth of pain when it drinks from the cup of ingratitude. David says of his own bitter experience: "It was not an enemy . . . Then I could have borne it: . . . but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance." Jesus laid down the wealth of his love before these people, and they had trampled upon it.

3. *Jesus wept because he knew of the impending ruin of the city.* The city which they had made the object of their haughty, worldly pride was soon to be overthrown. They were rushing toward their own destruction. If they were to blame for their blindness, so were they for their deafness to the messages that had been brought by the prophets and later by Jesus and John.

4. *The vision of need.* Christ wept because he saw his people's deep need. They are many still who look upon the suffering world with a Christlike vision. Have you ever asked yourself why some choose their places in life with regard to the greatest comfort, while others go to the hardest, least promising fields, and spend self and substance, when they might be resting or feasting? It is because the latter have the

Christlike vision. They see something in the dark world worth giving all to save. They have heard the deep cry of human need and have had compassion. They are weeping prophets, because above the city's revelry and laughter they hear its sobbing cry for help. Jesus loved individuals, but he also loved *people*. The love that causes tears to flow, not for individuals, but for a whole city, is all too rare. We can love our friends, our *proteges* and even our enemies, but to really yearn over people we can not call by name and who present to our gaze simply a great, troubled human sea is another matter.

5. *The love of Jesus for a lost world has not abated.* Still he weeps over the world that reaches blindly after it knows not what.

"The Son of God in tears
The wondering angels see;
Be thou astonished, O my soul,
He shed those tears for thee."

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not;" it was the wayward, sinning souls of which he thought. No wonder they called him the friend of publicans and sinners! No wonder the woman who was a sinner anointed his feet. The sinful who came to him knew that Christ was no mere reformer. He was a lover of his brethren. He is still the sym-

pathetic, suffering Saviour, who cares that one sheep should miss forever the path that leads to the Father's house. If the sinful world only knew how much he cares! Perhaps you and I have taken too little pains to reveal to it this side of his character. Perhaps we have miserably failed to embody it in our own lives.

F

L.

FATAL FOOLISHNESS.

Matt. 25: 1-13.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: A lesson to those who were satisfied with mere profession of righteousness.

1. The wise virgins. (1) These virgins knew what was expected of them; (2) they made the right use of their knowledge: (*a*) They maintained a state of readiness; (*b*) they had reserve force.

2. The foolish virgins. (1) Those who refuse to acquire needed knowledge; (2) those who know, but who hope to evade the consequences of their neglect.

3. Points of likeness. (1) They belonged to the same company; (2) they were called by the same name; (3) they alike carried lamps.

4. Points of difference. (1) The lamp allowed to take the place of the flame of fire; (2) the foolish forgot the future.

5. The waiting-time. (1) They all slept; (2) safety for the wise; (3) folly for the unprepared.

6. The return. (1) The joy of the ready; (2) dismay of the foolish.
 7. None can borrow fitness to meet God.
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While this parable is replete with striking truths that may be applied to life in various phases, we may believe that it was intended, primarily, as a rebuke to the religionists who had allowed the flame of love and devotion to die out of their hearts.

1. *The wise virgins.* (1) One of the necessary elements of wisdom is knowledge. These young women knew what was expected of them. Their preparation tells us this. (2) They put their knowledge to use. (a) They were in readiness; (b) they had reserve force. They carried oil in their vessels with their lamps. The Christian who does not store up reserve strength is sure to be brought to defeat at some unexpected moment.

2. *The foolish virgins.* We are told that these young women manifested foolishness in their failure to make provision for the future. Usually, foolishness of this kind is due to one of two causes. (1) A failure to acquire necessary knowledge. A woman, who realized she was near the end of her life, bewailed the fact that she was out of touch with God. She had been satisfied with mere profession, and had avoided the means which might have meant spiritual life and strength to her. (2) A presumptu-

ous belief that the natural consequences of neglect may be evaded. Most people believe in the working out of the law of sowing and reaping; but not a few persuade themselves that, in their own cases, the law will be suspended.

3. *Points of likeness.* So far as we know, the outward appearance of the wise and the foolish virgins may have been the same. (1) They belonged to the same company of those who were to meet the bridal party. (2) They were called by the same name—maidens of the marriage feast. (3) They alike carried lamps—the sign that they were light-bearers. So, there are many respects in which the man who merely “belongs to church” can not be distinguished from the one who has within him the light of life.

4. *Points of difference.* While the coming of the bridegroom brought out the difference between the wise and foolish virgins, it had existed all the while. (1) The foolish allowed the lamp to take the place of the flame of fire. The world could not see the inside of the empty oil-cans, nor of those that were full. (2) The wise virgins remembered that the oil in their lamps would not last forever, and provided for the future. The foolish virgins lived in the present.

5. *The waiting-time.* (1) The ten virgins rested while the bridegroom tarried. (2) The five virgins who were ready had a right to lie down and sleep. While this

does not mean that the Christian is ever to be satisfied with his achievements in this world and to quit work, it does mean that here, in the midst of life's uncertainty, he may rest in the Lord. (3) To the unready virgins, sleep meant danger.

6. *The return.* The coming of the bridegroom was no doubt sudden and startling to wise and foolish alike. The summons to meet the Lord has ever been like this. (1) To the wise virgins it meant (a) the end of the long delay; (b) the beginning of festal joy. (2) To the foolish it meant dismay; they tried to save themselves by borrowing from those who were prepared to go in to the marriage.

7. *No one can borrow fitness to meet God.* No one ever yet succeeded in borrowing the price of admission into the home of the blest. In the parable of the ten virgins Jesus pictures the frantic and futile efforts of the careless to do this. To have priest or preacher, or any other Christian, with you when the call comes may allay fears, but none of them can give you of the oil that has to be purchased at the price of a life of loyalty and service.

LI.

IN REMEMBRANCE AND IN HOPE.

Matt. 26: 26-30; 2 Cor. 11: 23-25.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Man's forgetfulness. The feast of the Passover. The new feast instituted.

1. *Looking toward the future.* The feast: (1) Instituted by the Lord himself; (2) the bread and the wine of the Paschal feast used: (a) The significance of the unleavened bread; (b) the blood of the grape.

2. The differences between the old and the new. (1) The Lord's Supper for people of every nation; (2) it was to be kept wherever there were believers; (3) it became the heart and center of the Lord's Day.

3. The purpose of the Lord's Supper. (1) For remembrance; (2) for self-examination; (3) to keep in mind the fact that he is coming again.

4. A personal message. He requests us to meet him at the weekly feast.

From first to last, man is childishly forgetful. It is this fact that lies behind all

of the feasts that were a part of the old order. When the keeping of the Passover was enjoined upon God's people, they were told that in the days to come, when their children should ask the meaning of the feast, they were to tell the story of the slain lamb, and of the deliverance of Israel from death and from bondage. Thus it was with the feast that Jesus was about to institute. To this day, when the table is spread on the first day of the week, we bear testimony concerning the Lamb of God, who was offered for the deliverance of all who would accept him. On this night of which our reading tells, the little company, sitting with Jesus around the board, was oppressed with strange fears. The Master had told them that their beautiful fellowship was about to be broken, but they did not understand.

1. *Looking toward the future.* The face of our Lord now turns to the future. The last chapter of the Old Dispensation needed only the last great sacrifice and all would be over. The last feast had been celebrated. Jesus said his hour was at hand—not his hour alone, but the hour of the ages, when a new hope was to be born out of death. The feast to which Jesus now invited his disciples faced the coming days. (1) It was Jesus himself who instituted the feast. It is no part of some theological system, no humanly devised rite. In our participation in it, or in our failure to do so, we have not priest nor preacher to

reckon with, since they had no part in instituting it. If we partake of it unworthily or refuse to sit at our Lord's banqueting-table on the first day of the week, our excuses must be such as will endure the scrutinizing of the eye that can not be deceived. (2) Jesus used the bread and wine of the Paschal feast—not the lamb, since he himself was to be the Lamb for sinners slain. (a) The bread was the unleavened bread, full of symbolic meaning. It is worth more than a passing glance. There must be a putting away of everything that contained this sign of uncleanness. (b) Taking the cup that contained the blood of the grape, he makes it a part of the new feast forever to remind men of the day when the blood of the Son of God confirmed the new covenant. The Oriental knew of the covenant written in blood; afterwards the meaning of our Lord's words came to his disciples with the illumination of understanding.

2. *The difference between the old and the new.* (1) The Passover of the Jews was for one nation of people alone. The Lord's table is for those who would honor Christ's name, regardless of place and nation. (2) Only in Jerusalem could the feast of the Passover be kept. Afterward wherever a company of disciples could be gathered together the new feast was kept, and was indeed the occasion for their coming together. (3) The feast of the Passover was observed once a year. The Lord's

Supper became the heart and center of the Lord's Day.

3. *The purpose of the new feast.* Jesus made plain here the purpose of the new feast. (1) It was for remembrance, that we may not grow careless and forget with what a great price we were redeemed. (2) For self-examination. Many have overlooked this, and have made it an occasion for examining others. (3) The Supper is to turn our thoughts to the time when he will come again. "Ye do show forth the Lord's death *till he come.*" Some one has compared the Bible to a great oratorio in which one may hear sometimes messages of warning, sometimes stirring calls to duty, and again tender pleading or words of comfort, but running all through the messages of prophet and sage, and sounding above all, he who listens may hear the strain, "He is coming!" By and by the angel chorus breaks into the mighty chorus, "He has come!" For a little while, as we read the story of his ministry in the flesh, the song rings, "He is here!" But that is for but a little while, and the King ascends to his place. Then in the church, wherever believers meet to keep the feast he ordained, the strain is heard, "He is coming again!"

4. *A personal message.* Each week when we come to the day that bears his name, his message to every believer is, "This do in remembrance of me." Ever since that memorable night in the upper

room, wherever the disciples have met to remember Christ unseen, he has come and stood in the midst of them. The preaching may be mediocre, the singing discordant and the house unattractive, but the loving heart may claim the promise that it is worth braving the storm or the heat to claim. Many a devout soul can look back to scenes like this:

“There were only two or three of us,
Who came to the place of prayer—
Came in the teeth of a driving storm,
But for that we did not care.
For after our songs of praise were risen,
And after our prayers were said,
The Lord himself was present
And broke us the living bread.”

LII.

LOOKING UP INTO HEAVEN.

John 14: 1-6.

OUTLINE.

1. Heavenly contemplation. (1) We know little about heaven; (2) what we do know is satisfying because: (a) Of the things that will not be there; (b) of its positive delights; (c) our Lord will prepare the place for us.

2. Heavenly contemplation is profitable because: (1) It keeps us from being earth-centered; (2) it reminds us of our destiny; (3) it keeps us from putting the body and its needs first.

3. The cure of trouble. (1) Not its removal, but strength to bear it; (2) the promise the heritage of none but Christ's followers.

4. The way to the heavenly land. Jesus the way. Whoever finds him finds the way. Whoever abides in him keeps in the way.

1. *Heavenly contemplation.* Nearly all that we have in the words of Jesus which would lead us to contemplate the joys of the world to come is found in his talk

to his disciples on the night of his betrayal. (1) We know very little about heaven. The things that, to our human conception, would need to be answered first, remain unanswered. The place, and the many details about which we would enquire if we contemplated a journey to an earthly country, have not been revealed. (2) On the other hand, we may answer the question of "How much do we know about heaven?" by saying, "A great deal." While we know not where nor when we shall enter the heavenly city, we do know how. While we can not fully take in the meaning, we know that heaven will mean perfect happiness, because (a) of the things that will not be there—sin, sickness, bereavement; (b) because of the positive delights it will furnish; (c) because of Christ's assurance that he will prepare a place for us. A man who was urging another to attend a banquet spoke glowingly of the feast that was to be spread. "Of what is it to consist?" his friend asked. "Oh, really, I don't know." "And yet you tell me it will be perfect?" "Of course. I know the man who has it in charge, and that is sufficient assurance that everything will be perfect." The assurance that He who knows us better than we know ourselves is to prepare a place for us tells us all we need to know.

2. *The profit of the heavenward look.* It is profitable that we sometimes look up to heaven because: (1) There is danger

of our becoming earth-centered. We say, and say truly, that one of the greatest dangers of the time is that of becoming wholly material in our thoughts and pursuits. Men look so long and so intently at the ideal of riches and luxurious living that the finer things that pertain to the soul are forgotten. No wonder Jesus said, "Set your affections on things above and not on things on the earth." (2) We need to look up into heaven that we may keep in mind our destined end. Paul says, "We have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come." During the journey to the land of promise, Israel dwelt in tents—reminders of the fact that their stay anywhere short of the land beyond was transient. If any would have stopped to build cities, there would be admonition that they should not anchor themselves to the wilderness. (3) It keeps us from making too much of the body. Certain religions that have risen during the past decade seem to fix man's attention wholly upon himself. The body becomes the chief thing, and that one who can recount the greatest number of wonderful cures has the greatest number of adherents. While the care of man's body is important, the body is temporal and the soul eternal. The former must ever be of secondary importance.

3. *The cure of trouble.* When Jesus spoke the words, "Let not your heart be troubled," he addressed those who had every reason to be troubled over the future

which they were facing. They had listened with mystified surprise to many things he had said; now as they looked toward the dark path, the end of which was hidden from their eyes, we do not need to be told that their hearts were troubled. (1) Jesus offered not to take away coming trial, but to show them its final, blessed outcome. He did not tell them that there were no trying experiences ahead of them. On the contrary, he had given them a glimpse of the future. But he did tell them not to be troubled about these things. But how could they help it? Here is the alternative: "Let not your heart be troubled;" instead of allowing trouble to consume your heart, "believe." As soon as they came to believe the truth of the assurances which followed, nothing could matter greatly. They knew how it was all going to turn out, and that in itself was satisfaction. (2) The promises are for none but Christ's followers. The words of our Lord concerning the many mansions, and the place he has gone to prepare for his own, has a sweet sound to the one who is footsore and weary and homeless here, but there is no comfort in them for those who, in the words of the old hymn, can not

"read their title clear
To mansions in the skies."

The value of God's richest promises depends not so much upon him as upon our own fitness to appropriate them.

4. *Finding the way.* We could not find the way to heaven unaided. Jesus is the way, because finding him means finding the way. One may lose his way, but he can not do so as long as he abides in Christ.

LIII.

A VIGIL WITH JESUS.

Matt. 26: 36-46.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Watching Jesus; watching with Jesus.

1. Let us keep this vigil with him.
 2. The heart of Jesus revealed. (1) A desire for companionship; (2) help sought from on high; (3) the shrinking flesh and the unwavering spirit.
 3. What was in the cup. (1) He had been rejected of his own; (2) he was bound in spirit; (3) the burden of the world's sin and need was upon him.
 4. A message to us. (1) The awfulness of sin; (2) the love that is boundless; (3) consideration for human weakness.
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After the long evening in the upper room, after the solemn words of admonition and the messages of comfort, all of which had in them a note of farewell, they sing one of the loved hymns and leave the place of meeting. Out across the silent city they take their way to the cool, black shadows of

the olive-trees on the hills outside of the gates.

1. *Let us keep this vigil with Jesus.* Those of us who with reverent steps have approached this passage in the life of the great Teacher may, without doing violence to the text, apply these words to ourselves. Let us tarry here for awhile in the shadows and watch with him whose soul now sinks low under the burden that weighs upon it. May we be able to see, as we have never seen before, him who entered, of his own will, the black valley of death and suffering for us.

2. *The heart of Jesus revealed.* This scene lays bare before us the heart of Jesus. We see here manifested: (1) A desire for human companionship and sympathy. Do you understand that? While there are some things we must live alone, what a difference it makes to feel that, just within reach, there are those who are ready to weep with us. (2) He sought help from his Father. Jesus, who came to share our every trial, came now to this one that every heart must sooner or later know—the failure of every earthly help. (3) Though he shrank from the ordeal, yet was he submissive to the Father's will. While the natural instinct of the flesh was a shrinking from that which confronted him, he did not falter concerning that which he came to do for man. A mother had been told that a surgical operation would save her life. There were helpless little ones in the home

who needed her, so she said bravely, "I am willing to do anything for the sake of my children." She went to a great surgeon, and he laid the whole matter before her, explaining the awful details of that through which she must pass. "Oh, I can not do that!" she cried. "Isn't there some other way?" The doctor shook his head. "Then, I am willing," she returned quickly.

3. *What the cup really was.* Let us not think for a moment that it was the dread of bodily suffering that caused our Lord to ask that the cup might be removed. (1) The final rejection by those for whom he had poured out his life and love. (2) He was bound in spirit. The hours before him were shrouded in darkness. (3) The burden of the world's sin was upon his heart. He saw the sinful, suffering world, floundering in its blindness, and the burden of his guilt and shame were, for the time, transferred to his own heart. He saw the blighting devastation of sin as man could not see it. No wonder he literally shed his blood even before he was led as a lamb to the slaughter.

4. *A message for us.* As we have tarried here and watched, what has this scene told us? (1) It has told us something of the fearful nature of sin, since it could cost Christ Jesus this agony of soul. (2) It has told us again of his love. (3) It has told us of his gentle consideration of those who, though they loved him, failed him in this last hour. "The spirit indeed is willing, but

the flesh is weak." No doubt the disciples, in the days that followed, looked back regretfully to this hour, and said, "We would not have slept if we had known." Afterward they were ready for the test. Pain, hunger, even death, found them ready to go with him. So it has been with his brave followers through the centuries that have passed since then.

There has never been a time when there were not those who were willing to go with Him all the way.

LIV.

THE WOUNDS OF A FAITHLESS
FRIEND.

Luke 22: 47-53; John 18: 1-11.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: Treachery that surprises.

1. A convenient tool. (1) Willing to use his intimate knowledge; (2) to put love to a base use; (3) to sell honor for money.

2. The arrest. (1) Men who judged Jesus by themselves; (2) the courage of non-resistance.

3. A rash defender. (1) No need of material defense; (2) divine triumphs come not by means of temporal weapons.

If we had never read the story of the betrayal of Christ, we might, when we reach the place where he declares that his betrayer is at hand, indulge in some speculation as to the identity of the betrayer. Some of us would, no doubt, point out, with considerable assurance, the guilty man. There was that man Simon who was rebuked by the Lord, whom he had invited to sit at meat with him. No doubt the scathing censure rankled in his breast. Doubtless he

would have felt more comfortable if he had known that the strange Galilean teacher were out of the way. Then, there were the scribes; none of them felt kindly toward him. Hadn't this man refused to honor their sanctimonious pretensions? "Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers!" Yes, there were many of this class who must have scowled darkly when they heard his name mentioned. The traffickers whom Jesus drove out of the temple must have felt that they had a grievance against him. He had ruined their business. We might imagine that one of these was the betrayer of whom Jesus spoke. Even now, after every word of the story has become familiar, a feeling of shocked surprise possesses us when we come face to face with Judas, who is to betray his Lord.

1. *The enemies of Jesus found in Judas a convenient tool* because (1) of his knowledge. We are told that he knew the place to which Jesus often resorted with his disciples (Judas being one of them). I fancy that when Judas mentioned this fact to those with whom he plotted, he used the word "they." "They often go to this place." He could hardly have said, "We go." (2) He was ready to put the privileges of friendship to a base use. The entry into this intimate circle and the kiss were thus made use of. Perhaps there was a lingering hope in the mind of Judas that the Mas-

ter would not discern his part in what was to follow.

2. *The arrest.* The armed mob, coming out to take Jesus, shows that (1) they judged him by themselves. (2) They themselves were overpowered. They felt the majesty of his presence. His non-resistance was not so much an exhibition of physical courage as it was of a reserve force of strength, in the presence of which swords and staves seemed puny weapons.

3. *A rash defender.* The disciples, who but a little while ago had been unable to keep their eyes open, are now awake to the situation. No doubt Peter's idea of how he was going to help Jesus was as vague as his aim, for we can scarcely believe that this was what Peter meant to do. (1) Jesus did not need defenders of this kind. He was where he was, not because his enemies were too much for him, but because he chose to submit to the Father's will. (2) The divine triumphs are never to come by the way of material force. When the church attempts to fight the world with its own weapons, it is seldom the gainer thereby. If the fight against sin and Satan were to be carried on with guns and swords, the Christians might be assured of their defeat. Every one might arm himself with weapons like that, but the armor of the Christian soldier can be worn by none but the true-hearted.

LV.

A TRAVESTY UPON JUSTICE.

(AT THE COURT OF HIS PEOPLE.)

John 18: 12-27; Matt. 26: 57-67.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The purpose of law. Why it sometimes fails in its purpose.

1. Prosecutors. (1) A trial by night; (2) the testimony of contradictory witnesses received; (3) Christ asked to testify against himself; (4) right of rulers to office disputed.

2. The conduct of Jesus. (1) He met fury with dignified self-control; (2) he answered the question concerning himself.

3. The conduct of his accusers. (1) They showed personal venom toward him; (2) they brought in a verdict without having had evidence against him; (3) they put a false construction on his words; (4) they pretended that his avowal of himself was a confession of guilt; (5) subjected him to indignities.

4. A friend that failed. (1) A dangerous place; (2) the rebuke.

The Jews, who had their own courts

where they might try certain minor cases, professed to be governed by the law of the Lord. In the main, the text of their law was what it professed to be, but that justice miscarried in their courts needs scarcely to be said. Misinterpretation of law has always been one of the resorts of those who would make law the servant of fraud instead of the servant of justice. Jesus was now to be tried before the court of his people, but the palpable air of triumph with which they led him to the place of trial showed that they had no thought of really giving him an opportunity of proving himself innocent, but that they were measurably certain that they would now be able to fix upon him the crime with which they intended to charge him.

1. *Guilty prosecutors.* We can fancy we see the illy concealed triumph written on the faces of those who had so long sought to take Jesus. What shall they do with him? Give him a fair trial, and let that settle the matter? Not a bit of it! That is just what has been troubling them. He has been tried at the court of public opinion, and, outside of their own ranks, there has been no unfavorable word concerning him. The trial of Jesus was unfair and illegal for a number of reasons: (1) They tried him at night, which was contrary to law. (2) They admitted the testimony of contradictory witnesses, failing to find the two reputable witnesses necessary to conviction. (3) Sought to have him testify against himself.

(4) They brought him before rulers whose right to office was in dispute.

2. *The conduct of Jesus.* (1) He refused to contend with those who were trying him. The dignified self-control with which he bore their contemptible course furnishes the world's one perfect example of meekness. The *controlled* man is the princely man. (2) Jesus calmly declared himself. "Was it necessary at this time?" some one asks. "Would he not have been justified in evading the question, 'Art thou the Christ?'" No, he would not have been justified in so doing, for that would have been a denial of his Sonship.

3. *The conduct of his accusers.* (1) They manifested their personal venom toward the one whom they professed to be trying. (2) They declared that he was worthy of death, when in reality they had proven nothing. Like the enemies of Daniel, they said, "We hate this man, therefore we must find some fault with him." (3) They twisted his actual words to suit their purpose. (4) They pretended to take his avowal of himself as a confession of guilt. (5) They subjected him to rebukes and indignities from which the lowest criminals were protected.

4. *A friend that failed.* Peter seems to have thought better of his impulse to flee, and has crept along far behind the procession that is bearing his best friend into the very jaws of death. (1) A dangerous place.

Peter in doubtful company. Peter skulking in the shadows to escape the sneers of the loafers and gossiping maids—for there was nothing worse for him to fear—was an easy mark for the evil one. (2) The sorrowful look which our Lord turned upon Peter must have been the deepest rebuke that ever penetrated a man's soul. We know after that look Peter went out and wept bitterly. Not many hours could have elapsed between his declaration of loyalty and this hour when he was plunged in the depth of remorse for having denied his Lord. His excursion into the way of the transgressor was soon over, but the record has never been effaced.

LVI.

A TRAVESTY UPON JUSTICE.

(AT THE COURT OF THE STRANGER.)

John 18:28-40.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The way of the transgressor.

1. The failure of the plot. (1) Limited authority; (2) the real charge of no weight with civil authorities.

2. The verdict of a stranger. (1) The demand of Christ's accusers; (2) Pilate's decision.

3. A hypocritical claim. (1) He made himself a king; (2) he advised against paying tribute to Cæsar.

4. The weakness of Pilate. (1) He tried to release Jesus; (2) he tried to please the Jews; (3) he scourged Jesus; (4) tried to awaken sympathy in his behalf; (5) put before the accusers a dreadful alternative.

(5) Fixing their own doom.

Some people have wondered at the words of Holy Writ which tell us that the way of the transgressor is hard. They call attention to the fact that man does not have

to make an effort in order to become a transgressor of the moral law. True as this is, it must be conceded that no one can defy the moral law for any length of time without discovering that he is driven to much that, if the consent of his reason and judgment were asked, he would reject. Thus it was with the enemies of Jesus. Naturally, the Jew hated above all else the Roman system, under which he felt himself to be unjustly held. To appeal to the Roman courts to help them carry out their schemes was, to the rulers of the Jews, humiliating indeed, but hatred of Jesus was stronger than their repugnance toward the Romans. They must ask their enemies to finish their undertaking for them.

1. *The failure of the plot.* So far the plot bade fair to end in nothing. (1) They lacked the authority they needed for the carrying out of their plot. By a fraudulent trial, they had convicted Jesus of blasphemy, but they could not execute the death penalty. (2) Their only charge was one that would have no weight with the civil authorities. They must take him to Cæsar's court, and they must find a new charge to fix upon him.

2. *The verdict of the stranger.* The Jews did not want Pilate's unprejudiced verdict in regard to Jesus. (1) They came with a demand. "We find this man worthy of death," they informed him. (2) Pilate examined Jesus briefly, but with the discrimination of a man who intended to do justice

to the case. He unhesitatingly declared that there was nothing that justified their bringing the prisoner to him. The offense of this dreamer, for as such he undoubtedly regarded Jesus, was one which had to do with the Jews' religion. In other words, as he saw it, the case was one which ought to have been settled in what he would call a church trial. He knows something about their law, therefore he tells them, with the air of one who is being unnecessarily bored with matters that do not concern him, that they take the man and judge him according to their law. This verdict forced them to put their brutal plot into plain words. "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." They had come into court, not to have a man tried, but rather to have legal sanction put upon what they wanted to do with him.

3. *A hypocritical charge.* The accusers of Jesus are forced to bring an accusation against Jesus that will count in the Roman court. What shall it be? What but treason against the government? (1) "We found him perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute unto Cæsar." What loyal subjects to Cæsar they had suddenly become! They knew, and they knew that Pilate knew, that tribute to Cæsar was the last drop of bitterness in the cup that the Roman Government was forcing them to drink. This is not the last time that evil-doers have tried to hide their baseness under the garb of

patriotism. Pilate understood this spasm of loyalty to the government, but he could not disregard it. Once more Jesus is examined—this time concerning his claims as a king. Jesus is a bit more explicit with Pilate than he has been heretofore during the trial. He owns himself to be a king, but explains that his kingdom is not of this world. Well, so long as it has to do with the other world, Pilate is not concerned. He returned to the accusers with a verdict for acquittal, strengthening his verdict by adding that neither did Herod find any fault in the man.

4. *The weakness of Pilate.* It is unfair for us to judge Pilate and the Jewish rulers by the same standards, yet thus far the conduct of Pilate in this case has been above reproach. From the standpoint, not of a religionist, but of a magistrate, he appears to have been anxious to do the right thing. (1) He wanted to release Jesus. (2) He wanted to escape the illwill of the Jewish leaders. There was a certain amount of political capital in their goodwill. (3) He thought that he could placate the enemies of Jesus by subjecting Jesus to scourging. (4) He seems to have tried to appeal to their sympathy. We are told that he brought Jesus forth, a pathetic figure indeed, with the robes of mockery upon him and the crown of thorns on his brow. After reiterating his verdict of the innocency of Jesus, he cried, "Behold the man!" (5) As a last resort, Pilate seeks to have them say that Jesus shall

be released, by forcing them to a decision between releasing him and releasing a robber and a murderer, but he had not gauged the depth of their cruel determination. They would have released the devil and all his angels rather than to have Jesus slip from their hands.

5. *Fixing their own doom.* Goaded from one point to another by their fierce passions, we hear them cry out, "*We have no king but Cæsar!*" Humiliating confession for the Israelite who had boasted that he was never in bondage to any man! He considered himself to be, in a peculiar sense, a son of God, and only those whom God authorized had a right to rule over him. Hear them declaring now that Cæsar is their only master. In their hearts they did not believe it, but it was true. Dreadfully true! God had turned from them. The last semblance of a scepter was soon to be wrested from Judah, and they were to feel the hand of their real owner upon them. Did they remember in the days to come, those days of awful trial, when the armies encompassed Jerusalem, that they had declared that they had no king but Cæsar?

LVII.

HIMSELF HE COULD NOT SAVE.

Matt. 27:32-51.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: When success looks like failure. The cross not the end, but the beginning.

1. *On the way to the cross.* Pressed into service.

2. *Looking on the cross.*

3. The taunts of enemies. (1) They challenge; (2) he can not save himself.

4. *The words that he spoke* (not his last words): (1) Concerning others: (a) Praying for his enemies; (b) the thief beside him; (c) thoughtfulness of Mary; (2) words about himself: (a) "I thirst;" (b) the darkness of being alone.

5. A triumphant ending: (1) A completed work; (2) in his Father's hands.

When right comes to the scaffold, wrong is ready to congratulate itself on its triumph, but there is certain to be another chapter which puts a different color upon matters. The foes of Jesus won a sweeping victory when they put him to death. To

them it looked as though this troublesome thing were settled for good and all, and so it would have been had Jesus not been what he claimed to be. To-day we approach the cross to view, not the end, but rather the beginning, of the triumphs of Jesus who was called Christ.

1. *As they went.* Let us keep in mind that the body which had endured the horrible scourging, and, indeed, the whole physical man that had been subjected to a severe strain of long duration, was in no way immune from the pain that might have been felt by the commonest man. We can not wonder, therefore, that Jesus was unable to carry the cross to which he was to be nailed. The Simon whom they compelled to carry the cross was probably himself a disciple of Jesus. We fancy that he was glad all of his days that he was allowed to do this small service for the Lord in his hour of need; for all this, I think he must have regretted that it was written concerning this service, "Him they compelled to bear the cross."

2. *Looking on the cross.* When they crucified him, we are told: "And sitting down, they watched him there." This looking upon the suffering Lord was not that of sympathy. There were those real disciples who stood by the cross till the last, but these who had crucified him watched his sufferings with cool indifference that seemed to say, "He is nothing to us."

3. *The taunts of his enemies.* The soldiers had not plotted to put Jesus to death, but they joined in the taunts that his enemies were hurling at him. (1) They fancied that he would escape from the place of humiliation if he could. They called on him to save himself. They even declared that they would believe on him if he would descend now from the cross. (2) It is true that there was one thing the Saviour of men could not do. "He saved others; himself he cannot save." He could not save himself and be the world's Redeemer. Neither is it possible for him, who would follow after Christ and save others, to save himself. It is his part to spend and be spent. "Whosoever saveth his life shall lose it."

"Save thyself!"

So mocks the unbelieving world to-day
At Him who, loving, gives his life away.
"If thou wouldst follow pleasure's train,
Forsake the shameful cross
And save thyself from cruel pain."

Ah, no! The scoffers spoke the truth:
Who saveth others must forsooth,
In sacrifice of self, be brave.
He can not save himself
If others he would save.

4. *The words that he spoke.* Often the multitudes had crowded close about the Master to catch every word that he spoke. No such throng surrounded him now, and yet the world throughout the centuries has listened with earnest attention to the words

that fell from his lips while he was lifted up. They are not his last words, as we have sometimes called them. His last message was a rallying-cry to the church, and an assurance of his presence with his own to the end of the age. (1) Nearly all of the recorded utterances of our Lord upon the cross are called forth by his anxiety for others. (a) He prayed that his enemies might be forgiven. When we see one unselfishly putting aside his own interests and feelings that he may plead for the welfare of his friends, the spectacle fills us with admiration. But what shall we say of one who prays for the forgiveness of his enemies, and that while he is suffering at their hands? We are filled with amazement as we hear him say, "They know not what they do." Paul said once, when he was addressing an audience of Jews, "If ye had known, ye would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (b) The miserable men who bore him company in his death claimed his attention. The man who threw himself upon the mercy of Jesus with the first glimmer of understanding that he was in the presence of the King of kings, was tenderly assured that his prayer would be heard. While he held out the light of hope for this penitent one, he lighted for all the world the dark valley that stretches beyond the grave, and assured his own of the transition from this present world into the world of glory. (c) Jesus did not forget the one who, with the way

that is a part of loving motherhood, had followed him to the cross. The disciple who had stood closest to Jesus through the three years of his ministry is given a precious charge. A precious charge because the charge was from his hands, but is it not true that he has given a like charge into the hands of each disciple? "Care for those who need care, as I would care for them if I were here."

(2) When we turn to the words of Jesus concerning himself we have but a brief sentence that tells us anything of the physical suffering through which he was passing: (a) "I thirst!" He had refused the portion of drugged wine, but he receives the few drops of vinegar with seeming gratefulness. (b) There is no moment which so fills us with awe as that which caused the Lord to cry out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was not that faith was blotted out, but for the time being the face of the Father was covered with a thick cloud. The awful loneliness that has come at some time to every child of God was upon him. In this deep valley he was but bearing a part of the burden that humanity must bear. When Jesus tasted death for every man, it was not so much what we are wont to call death, as the experiences which lead down into the impenetrable blackness of sorrow and despair.

5. *A triumphant ending.* Pilate, with a probable idea of humiliating the rulers who

had forced him to deliver Jesus into their hands, had given to Jesus in his death the royal title that belonged to him. Many curious eyes must have gazed upon the inscription, "THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Nothing could be more majestic than the close of his life among men, surrounded though he was with that by which his enemies had sought to degrade him.

(1) A completed work. "It is finished!" Not that the world whom the Father loved had been saved and reconciled to God, but that the work he came to do had reached its completion. He had finished all that Heaven will ever devise for the redemption of the race. While the work of Jesus was finished, that of his followers had but begun.

(2) A lovely ending. Listen to his words as he passes out of life that is in the flesh: "Into thy hands I commit my spirit." Like a little child, he falls asleep in the arms of the Father. For a moment our minds travel swiftly back to Bethlehem; we think of the angel chorus, the light of the star, and all of the glory that marked his advent. Here we find darkness, the symbols of shame, and the maledictions of those that hate him, but in the midst of it all shines forth the glory of the serene countenance of the Son of God—forevermore the Light of the world.

LVIII.

AS IT BEGAN TO DAWN.

Matt. 28: 1-10; Mark 16: 1-8; Luke 24:
1-12; John 20: 1-18.

Text: Matt. 28: 1.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The end of the old order; the dawn of a new day.

1. "While it was yet dark." (1) A sad ministry; (2) the end of a precious hope; (3) a perplexing difficulty ahead.

2. Sorrow that turned to joy. (1) The missing Lord; (2) the vision of angels.

3. Look up and not down. (1) He has risen as he said; (2) seeking the living among the dead.

4. Honored messengers. (1) They sped quickly; (2) the Lord reveals himself to those who go to tell the good news.

5. A day of rejoicing forevermore.

"When the sabbath was ended." On the face of it we have nothing more here than a commonplace chronicle of the transition of days. But, looking back to the events of the new day, and to all that im-

mediately followed it, we read the words with a new meaning. The Sabbath had come to an end, with all that pertained to it. The old order had passed, and the new order had begun. God, who in times past had spoken to his people by the prophets, had at last spoken to the world by his Son. The Word made flesh was to be with the world no longer. The next message was to be from Him who had passed in triumph through the gate of death.

1. "*While it was yet dark.*" Not only were the heavens still shrouded in gloom when the women started out on that morning of the first day of the week; it was yet dark in the hearts and minds of those who had loved and followed Jesus. (1) A sad ministry. The women are not to be commended for superior faith at this time. It was the affection that was not quenched by the closing of the door of death between them and their Lord that sent them forth. (2) The anointing with spices meant that a precious hope had come to an end. They thought of him now as the dead Master. (3) To add to the gloom, there was a seemingly unsurmountable difficulty ahead of them. While faith did not suggest to these women that Jesus was alive, it does seem to have assured them that, in some way or other, the way would be opened for their loving ministry. At any rate, they did not turn back, because they did not see how they were to accomplish their purpose.

2. *Sorrow that turned to joy.* Not all of the women seem to have reached the tomb at the same time, but, in the main points, their experiences were the same. (1) They found, not merely an open, but also an empty, tomb. Sorrow is turned into sharp distress. How closely does this feature of the story touch our human experience! How often, when we have dreamed that we had already touched the depth of sorrow, an added grief has shown us we were mistaken! We understand Mary's cry: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him!" (2) How gloriously did joy take the place of sorrow! To all of these women who sought Jesus, sorrowing, came the message of divine comfort.

3. *Look up and not down.* (1) Along with the wonderful announcement of the resurrection of the Lord came the reminder of his word while he was yet with them: "Remember how he spake unto you." We are told that then they remembered. How like our own tardiness in laying hold of the gracious truths of the gospel. They had to be reminded of what might have been theirs all the while. (2) Seeking the living among the dead. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" the heavenly messengers asked of the women. Ah, why, indeed! Life lay not in the dark earth; that was the abode of death. Why seek ye the living among the dead? The crowds sweep past,

breathless and dissatisfied, in their blind quest after real life. "I shall find the satisfaction of desire here, and *that* will be life," one murmurs, and he grovels on the earth after gold. "I shall find it here," another decides, as he reaches for the laurel wreath, unconscious of the fact that it is already beginning to die. And so they seek among the things that belong to death and time. Why seek ye the living among the dead? Only One there is in whom is found life abundant, everlasting. Set your affections upon things above.

4. *Honored messengers.* These women were not simply recipients of the good news. It was theirs to carry to others. Thus it has ever been. Along with the precious truth that Jesus lives to save is the "Go quickly." (1) The women went quickly. The news was too good to keep. Nothing short of a personal appreciation of the gospel will quicken the feet of them that bring good tidings. (2) Blest in going. It was as they went on their holy mission that Jesus met the women. We can not believe that they would have beheld him if they had tarried after they knew that he wanted them to tell of his triumph.

5. *The day of rejoicing forevermore.* Still the church finds joy in this story that was old centuries ago. Do you ask why it is so? Oh, brother, we have only to try, for a little while, to think of what must have happened to this old world if the shad-

ows that wrapped the Holy City that dark day had never been lifted! These things are ours to-day because Jesus lives and reigns—our country, our homes, our loves, our hope of a life beyond the stars.

LIX.

THREESCORE FURLONGS WITH
JESUS.

Luke 24: 13-35.

OUTLINE.

Introduction: The setting.

1. A strange companion. (1) Unrecognized; (2) they were not expecting Jesus.

2. An interested listener. (1) A probing question; (2) the revelation of blasted hopes.

3. A wonderful teacher. (1) A rebuke; (2) an unfolding of prophecy.

4. A glorious revelation. (1) A journey that was too short; (2) the urgent appeal, "Abide with us;" (3) their eyes were opened.

5. The afterglow.

The first Lord's Day was drawing to a close, yet those who were afterwards to keep it in loving remembrance knew not that it was the Lord's Day. The two men, of whom we know little except that they belonged to the royal company of those who had followed the great Teacher, had started on a commonplace journey to a little town

near Jerusalem. They were mourning for their dead Master, recalling, no doubt, as they talked, various things he had said, and mighty works the like of which had never been seen before.

1. *A strange companion.* We have no means of knowing how far along the road the two disciples had traveled when they became conscious that a traveler had joined them. That he was beside them, an unseen listener, before they became conscious of his presence, we may well believe. (1) He was not recognized. We are told that their eyes were holden. There has been a good deal of discussion that has arrived nowhere, as to the sense in which this was so. All we really know is that they did not discern their Lord in this stranger who dropped into step with them. Their hearts and their minds, as well as their eyes, were "holden." (2) They were not looking for their Master.

2. *An interested listener.* It was while they talked that Jesus drew near. We do not believe it was accidental that these two were the ones who were so honored. If they had been talking upon idle themes, or upon the prospects for a good yield of grapes, or about the fish market in Jerusalem, we can scarcely believe that Jesus would have drawn near to them. (1) The question Jesus asked is one that it would not always be easy for us to answer to him. They were ready to answer his question, "What communications are these that ye

have one with another?" It is worth our while to ask if we could always answer as promptly a like question if he should draw near. Blessed are those whose conversation is of such a nature that they could at any time include Christ in their fellowship. (2) Their answer revealed their hopelessness. They told him of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had hoped would redeem Israel. Doubtless there was much more of it than is recorded here, but they came too soon to the pitiful end of the story. Yes, it was the end to them. There was an utter hopelessness in their confession, "We hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel." There had been glorious days, but everything was in the past tense.

3. *A wonderful teacher.* (1) A surprising rebuke. What was this the stranger was saying? "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all the prophets have spoken." Why, they believed the prophets! They must for the moment have been filled with indignant astonishment that this stranger should intimate that they did not believe the prophets. (2) The unfolding of prophecy. As the stranger went from prophecy to prophecy, they began to see things in the familiar text that they had never seen before. "He interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." We pause for a moment to wonder what he said—that wonderful fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, for instance, wouldn't it

be worth days of this common life to hear him repeat those words? The very things that had caused them to despair were but the working out of all the great things God had promised through the prophets.

4. *A glorious revelation.* (1) The journey was coming to an end all too soon. They could not bear to lose this one whose brief companionship had changed the whole outlook of life to them. (2) "Abide with us," they plead, "for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." They did not know that, though the bodily presence of this one was soon to be seen no more, he was to abide with his own to the end of time. (3) He took the bread and blest it, then—what was it that filled them with breathless wonder? As he broke the bread, *they knew*. In a moment his place was vacant.

5. *The afterglow.* It was only after he had vanished from their mortal sight that they began to see. In the afterglow of his presence, no wonder they cried: "Did not our hearts burn within us when he talked with us by the way, and when he opened to us the scripture?" No wonder they were eager to tell others of this gracious experience which had been theirs. They did not know at the time how great was their privilege. We may believe, however, that to the end of their lives they recalled this walk and recalled the thrill of joy in their hearts when he brought dead hope to life again.

LX.

FORTY WONDERFUL DAYS.

Acts 1: 1-33.

OUTLINE.

Introduction.

1. The Lord has risen from the tomb. The testimony of those to whom he appeared the first day: (1) The women; (2) Simon Peter; (3) the two who journeyed to Emmaus; (4) the company in the upper room at Jerusalem.

2. Testimony for the doubter. (1) He missed seeing the Lord. (2) He refused to believe. (3) He underrated his own faith.

3. He met them in Galilee. The confession of the man who denied.

4. A mountain of world-wide vision. (1) The authority; (2) the charge: (a) To save the people of all nations; (b) to make learners of them; (3) the divine conditions of entrance into the kingdom: (a) Belief in the risen Christ; (b) baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; (4) the promise of the divine companionship.

5. The mount of parting. (1) The promise of power; (2) witnessing in all the world.

It was needful that those who were to be Christ's witnesses should have no doubts about the truth of the wonderful fact of his resurrection. If on that first morning alone they had seen him, some might have come to doubt whether or not the appearance was real. The eleven appearances to different ones and in different places were enough to confirm the faith of the most doubtful. Ever after this, the bodily resurrection was as real to them as was his crucifixion.

1. *The day of the resurrection one of manifold testimonies.* (1) Naturally, to the women first of all, since they seem to have first of all placed themselves in a position to receive the good news. (2) To Peter (how and where we do not know), that he might know that Satan, who had sifted him, was not to claim him. (3) To the travelers who talked of him as they walked by the way. (4) To the company gathered in a room in Jerusalem. We have no information concerning the kind of meeting they were holding, but we are certain they could have been talking of but one thing. A bit of wonderful comfort had been offered to them by the women who told of the glorious vision they had seen, but faith was insufficient, and so they turned sadly from the cup that might have turned their heaviness into joy. In the midst of their sorrowful conversation, those two whose hearts had burned within them while He talked with them by the way, appeared.

Can you imagine how ardent and how irresistible must have been their testimony, "The Lord is risen indeed!" We are not told how despair changed to glowing hope, but we do know that hope became realization. "Jesus came and stood in their midst; . . . the disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord."

2. *Testimony for the doubter.* How tenderly considerate was our Lord for the weak ones. We have as witness his care for Peter, who in a few brief hours became a backslider. Now it is Thomas. Thomas is sometimes spoken of as "the man who was not at prayer-meeting"; however, that designation does not differentiate him from multitudes of his brethren, living and dead. He may not have been to blame for his absence, but we know this: (1) He missed seeing his Lord; (2) he refused to believe that his brethren had seen him; (3) he was certain that the testimony that convinced his brethren would not have satisfied him. Thomas, however, wasn't as much of a skeptic as he took himself to be. The first look convinced him, and he was ashamed of his bombastic words.

3. *He met them in Galilee.* Jesus had sent word to his disciples that he would meet them in Galilee, and we would wonder greatly if these friends of his had failed to keep the tryst. (1) The confession of the man who denied. What a changed Simon we find here. He is not instituting com-

parisons between himself and others as he did that day when he declared: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will not I." He was ready to say with chastened manner, when he was questioned, "Thou knowest that I love thee."

4. *A mountain of world-wide vision.* Here, on a mountain (Acts 1:12), he gave his chosen ones a glimpse of the field into which they were to enter: (1) He proclaims his unlimited authority—"all power." (2) The charge he lays upon them is world-wide: (a) It is his will that all shall accept him; (b) that all shall become learners under him. (3) There is nothing vague about the terms of admission to the kingdom: (a) Belief in the risen Christ; (b) the testimony of Christian baptism, wherein the penitent believer holds up a picture of the great fact upon which the gospel rests—that he who died and was buried arose to live again. (4) Declaration of his presence with the believer. The "Go, and I'll go with you!" rings on to the end of time.

5. *The mount of parting.* At the hour of his going back to his Father, Jesus reiterated the promises that were to mean new life to the world: (1) The promise of power. Soon they were to go forth as the King's messengers. They were to receive a special enduement which should enable them (a) to recall all that he had said. This was too important to be left to mere human powers of remembrance and understanding.

(b) To do mighty works. Like the miracles of Jesus, their purpose was that of confirming faith. The people must have proof that they were divinely authorized to speak. (2) Universal witnessing. He said to them: "Ye shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judæa and Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth." Was that promise fulfilled? Imagine Peter's saying as he takes up his crown of martyrdom: "It is true that I have been allowed to witness for Christ in many cities, but I have not been his witness in the uttermost parts of the earth." Oh, Simon, son of Jonas, if you could but go to-day into the dark lands that are just opening up to the gospel messenger and listen to the words by which the truth is being presented to these darkened souls, you would find that you are witnessing in the uttermost part of the earth. Possibly, to the vision of these apostles, what they did was limited to the present. They did not foresee that down to the end of time their words would go on ringing from heart to heart and from lip to lip; that when centuries and centuries had rolled away, they would still be Christ's witnesses on the earth.

AFTERWORD

Can you picture to yourself a being who has come to the earth from another world, and who goes about, through city and town, asking the question, "Where is he that was born king?" On every hand he sees signs of one whom they call "Jesus." The greatest music has enshrined his name, and the greatest artists have given us their conceptions of his face.

"Where is he?" the stranger asks wonderingly.

"Oh," we reply, "his stay here was very brief. For a little more than thirty years he lived among men, then he went away again." But the question stays with us. There are so many now who need him. They are asking where they may find him.

Listen! He has not left us to grope in the dark. Go down into the places where the hungry and the naked and the friendless are gathered. Go with your help and comfort and cheer. *He is there.*

Where is he? Wherever to-night human lips are telling the story of divine love, he is there. On the bleak coasts of Labrador, under the burning skies of the tropics, in stately churches in the city, in humble missions on obscure streets, and in schoolhouses

on the wind-swept prairies—wherever one is carrying out the Great Commission his “Lo, I am with you,” is being verified.

Where is he? Oh, men and women with world-weary hearts, he is here. Again listen! “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” May many of those who have longed for him, though they knew it not, bid him enter that they may sit with him at the banquet of love.

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